

**READING COLONIAL REPRESENTATIONS:
Kukis and Nagas of Manipur**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY



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We recommend that the work may be placed before the panel of examiner(s) for further evaluation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kunal Chakrabarti', written over a large, thin, diagonal line that extends from the top left towards the bottom right.

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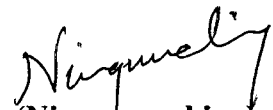
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DECLARATION

This dissertation entitled “**Reading Colonial Representations: Nagas and Kukis of Manipur**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university.


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TO,

MOM AND DAD

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--|------------|
| Introduction | 01 |
| Chapter I Manipuris, Nagas, and Kukis in Colonial Records: Shifting Perceptions | 11 |
| I Geographical Spaces and Characterizing People | 12 |
| II Religion and Customs | 22 |
| III Livelihood and Economy of the Hill and Valley Communities | 28 |
| Chapter 2 The Heathens as the ‘Barbaric’ and the ‘Uncivilized’: Nagas and Kukis in Missionary Representations | 40 |
| I The Missionaries Arrive | 43 |
| II Amongst the Nagas and the Kukis | 47 |
| III Healing the Mind and Body | 57 |
| IV Transforming the Tribes | 63 |
| V Creating Naga and Kuki Identities: Language and Dialect | 70 |
| Chapter 3 Reinterpreting the Kuki Rebellion | 80 |
| I Appropriation of the Rising by Different Groups | 81 |
| II The Story of the Unrest | 84 |
| III Contextualizing the Rebellion | 88 |
| IV Kukis, Manipuris and Nagas | 95 |
| V Suppression of the Rebellion | 101 |
| Conclusion | 109 |
| Bibliography | 111 |
| Glossary | 119 |

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(NINGMUANCHING)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ABFMS | American Baptist Foreign Missionary Records |
| KNO | Kuki National Organisation |
| MSA | Manipur State Archives |
| NAI | National Archives of India |
| NMML | Nehru Memorial Museum and Library |
| ZRO | Zomi-Reunification Organisation |

INTRODUCTION

Manipur, which lies in the easternmost part of India, was a princely state before it became part of the Indian Union in 1947. It became a full-fledged state in 1972.¹ In 1891, an English lady described the valley of Manipur and its surrounding hills as a 'pretty place, more beautiful than many of the show-places of the world...beautiful in its habitable parts...more beautiful in those tracts covered with forest jungle...'² It is still a beautiful place. Afflicted however as it is with violence and ethnic clashes, Manipur, despite its scenic beauty, cannot be referred to as a "little paradise on earth."³ In the 1990s, it witnessed a violent Naga-Kuki ethnic conflict that was marked by a 'chain of massacre' between the Kukis and Nagas.⁴

Manipur is the home of the Meiteis, the Pangals (Manipuri Muslims), and of various tribes broadly included within the fold of Nagas and Kukis. The terms 'Nagas' and 'Kukis' are used to refer to a collection of 'hill tribes'- as they were called in the colonial period - who were believed to share a common culture and everyday practices. While both terms were used in pre-colonial times, often by the people of the plains, these acquired a specific meaning in the colonial period. Today, as Sajal points out, identifying with a Naga or a Kuki identity has become increasingly important since, concern for security necessitates affiliation with a particular generic identity. As a result, smaller tribes are faced with the question of affiliation with these larger groups, or alternatively prefer to remain neutral and assert their own identity.⁵ In short, the situation is indeed volatile.

While colonial officers also draw upon pre-colonial pasts in their understanding of the tribe, my dissertation will however focus only on the understanding of the tribe as it emerged as a distinct category in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through a close reading of selected texts and writings, this dissertation will look at a historical process through which the hill-tribes of Manipur came to be understood. This dissertation, by analyzing the missionary encounter with the hill tribes of Manipur, will also show how missionaries were a part

¹ Dr.S.M.A.W.Chishti, *Political Development in Manipur 1919-1949*, Delhi, 2005, p. 13.

² Ethel St. Clair Grimwood, *My Three Years in Manipur*, London, 1891, p.1.

³ R.Constantine, *Manipur: Maid of the Mountains*, New Delhi, 1981, p.1.

⁴ Bhagat Oinam, 'Patterns of Ethnic Conflict in the North-East: A Study on Manipur', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 2, May 24-30, 2003, p. 2032.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.18-24.

of this process. I will thereafter study, what has been termed in colonial records as the Kuki Rebellion. While official perceptions on the hill-tribes were reflected in the representation of the Kuki Rebellion in colonial representations, different groups within the Kukis in recent times have appropriated the history of the rebellion, or stayed away from it.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TRENDS

Let me take up for discussion two themes that would be relevant for a historiographical survey. The colonial construction of 'tribes' and approaches to tribal rebellions. Much has been written on the creation of categories and the problems in the conceptualization of the 'tribe'. In this context, different scholars have discussed the concept of race, the emergence of the discipline of anthropology, and the colonial project of knowledge creation for administrative purposes that ultimately led to the separation of caste and tribe as two distinct groups. Let me summarize some of these arguments.

As a background to the historiographical analysis, I will refer briefly to the arguments of Talal Asad and Adam Kuper who have made us critically reflect on the category of 'tribe'. Talal Asad, in his introduction to the edited work "*Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*", looks at the links between colonialism and anthropology. In his view, 'Social anthropology defined itself as the study of primitive societies as it attempted to extend the knowledge of man and society by analyzing and studying 'primitive' communities, 'simpler peoples' or 'pre literate societies'.⁶ In his opinion, social anthropology emerged as a distinctive discipline in the beginning of the colonial era. He further argues that anthropology was rooted in colonialism, which was a historical moment of an unequal power encounter between the West and the Third World. And it is this encounter which furnished cultural and historical information about the societies progressively dominated by the West. It was this association between colonialism and anthropology that generated a 'certain kind of universal understanding' and at the same time 're-enforces the inequalities in capacity' between the European colonizer and the colonized.⁷ Information and

⁶ Talal Asad (ed.), *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, London, 1973, p.11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

understanding produced by anthropology were used by those with the greatest capacity for exploitation. As the powerful who support research expect kind of information which would confirm them in their world, anthropologists objectify their knowledge and contribute towards maintaining the structure of power represented by the colonial system. The claim to political neutrality by an anthropologist and the scientific definition of this discipline as a disinterested study of 'other cultures' helped to mark off the anthropologist's enterprise from that of European colonist. However the enterprise of anthropologists and dominant colonists merged together as the former could not envisage a political future for the subordinate people he studied.

Relevant in this broader context of critical anthropology is also the work of Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society*, in which he looks at the anthropological idea of primitive society as an 'illusion'. Behind this idea of primitive society is the belief that there was a 'direct progression from primitive society through various intermediate stages to modern society.'⁸ From the second half of the 19th century, there was the belief that "human history was a history of progress and that all living societies could be ranked on a single evolutionary scale".⁹ Anthropologists defined 'primitive society' as the opposite of 'modern society'. For the anthropologists, as Kuper writes, "modern society was defined above all by the territorial state, the monogamous family and private property. Primitive society therefore must have been nomadic, ordered by blood ties, sexually promiscuous and communist."¹⁰ Thus anthropologist held the assumption that modern society had evolved from its exact opposite.

Drawing upon some of these ideas, scholars have worked upon the problem of conceptualization of the tribe in the Indian context. Ajay Skaria, in his "Shades of Wildness Tribe, Caste, and Gender in Western India",¹¹ has argued that the distinction between tribes and castes in the nineteenth century was "a product of colonial theories and practices" which "drew on and was made possible by colonial constructions of wildness". The colonial officials produce distinctions between caste and tribes, and saw 'caste' as more civilized than 'tribes', who were considered to be wild. But by

⁸ Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: transformations of an illusion*, London and New York, 1988, p. 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹ Ajay Skaria, 'Shades of Wildness, Tribes, Caste and Gender in Central India,' *Journal of Asian Studies* No.3. Vol.56, Aug, 1997, pp. 726-745.

attributing more civilized qualities to the castes, the colonial administrators were however careful not to erase the difference between the civilized Europeans – the ‘colonizers’ – and the wild ‘colonized’, so as to retain the difference between the colonizers and colonized in order to justify colonial presence. Ajay Skaria points out that this was done by seeing the difference between tribes and castes as a difference not between the civilized and the wild, but in terms of the “different forms of wildness, each with its distinctive politics of gender and time.”¹² Tribes were celebrated as ‘noble’. Caste, on the other hand, was often seen as effeminate. Furthermore, Skaria reminds us that the ‘colonial list of tribes’ prepared in the late nineteenth century was ‘fundamentally arbitrary’ as it was the product of ‘seizing’, ‘magnifying’ or ‘imagining’ differences. The list he argued can best be described as a “process of primitivization, or of the invention of primitive society.”¹³

Crispin Bates in “Race, Caste and Tribe in Central India”¹⁴ argues that, the colonial discourse on castes and tribe was ‘situated in a political order in which concepts of race were used quite instrumentally’. The British officials felt that distinctions of race qualities were fundamental to the position that they held in India, and that diversity of races in India was favorable to the maintenance of their rule. A ‘Pseudo Scientific’ theory of race was thus used to maintain the subordination of the colonized by the colonizers.¹⁵ Bates further argues that the discourse of race was hegemonic in that it was applied universally. There was one conclusion which was unavoidable. The theories of race, though changing, always gave the conclusion that the modern European was superior to any other race, and that the degree of difference between the European and other races was simultaneously a measure of the backwardness of the subject or objectified population.¹⁶

Sivaramakrishnan has written about colonial statemaking and the subsequent perception of certain regions as wild places – zones of anomaly – that were different from the plains. He points out that forests were integral to the production of a colonial stereotype, namely that of the simple and innocent, tribal people. Using the concepts

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 727.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.731-734.

¹⁴ Crispin Bates, ‘Race, Caste and Tribes in Central India: The Early Origins of Indian Anthropometry’, in Peter Robb edited *Concept of Race in South Asia*, Delhi, 1998, pp. 219-259.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

of 'discourse of frontiers' and 'zones of anomaly' he examines the making of political frontiers as the British struggled to establish their rule in the jungle areas. In the British perception, the Jungle Mahals was unremarkable in terms of production and prosperity, and was peopled by savages. This was an area where fields and farmers were absent, where commerce could not function smoothly, and where revenue was collected through tribute. Wildness was a marker of this forested zone of anomaly.¹⁷

In his "The Dangers of Belonging: Tribes, Indigenous Peoples and Homelands in South Asia", Van Schendel has analyzed the historical background and implications of the use of terms like 'tribe' and 'indigenous peoples' in South Asia. He argues that in colonial context, the term 'tribe' becomes part of a language of power that differentiated not only rulers and subjects, but also differentiated between groups of subjects in South Asia. The meaning of tribe became more specific with time, and by late nineteenth century, it became 'part of a comparative taxonomy' that compared contemporary societies and their rank in a hierarchical structure based on civilization and modernity. 'Tribes' referred to the society that occupied the lowest rank. Tribals, as he writes, were thus 'uncivilized (hence wild, primitive and savage) and unmodern (hence backward and ruled by custom).' Moreover 'tribe' in south Asia was opposed to 'caste'.¹⁸ Ideas about tribes were closely linked to the influential theory of social evolutionism that explained human difference based on their advancement along a single line of progress. This way of perceiving human difference inspired an ideology which legitimized European rule over non-Europeans or domination of the civilized over the uncivilized. 'Tribe' thus became a useful administrative category as it justified colonial rule. Tribes therefore required the 'paternalistic protection' and 'violent correction' of the rulers.¹⁹ There were different ways of identifying a tribe. Colonial officials identified 'tribes' based on their 'mode of subsistence', 'level of technology', place of settlement, isolation as well as 'absence of written script or codified law'. The official categorization of 'tribes' fitted well with the indigenous elite's superior attitude towards people living in the forests.²⁰ Thus the term 'Tribe' connotes inferiority. As an analytical tool and administrative

¹⁷ K.Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forests : State Making and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India* , New Delhi,1999.

¹⁸ W.van Schendel. *The Dangers of Belonging: Tribes, Indigenous Peoples and Homelands in South Asia*, in Danial J Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta, *The Politics of belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi*, forthcoming from Routledge, 2011, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

category, 'tribe' remains hegemonic in South Asia, even though markers of tribal identity are no longer supported by evidence.²¹

In my discussion of historiographical approaches to tribal rebellion, let me begin with K.S. Singh's study of Birsa Munda and his movement in Chhotanagpur.²² With a breakdown of their traditional life that followed their contact with the colonial state, the tribals opposed the powerful forces that encroached upon their world. Singh argues that it was primarily grievances regarding lands that caused tribal movements. As he said, 'the Mundas were not fighting for the nation, a concept of which they were innocent at their stage of historical development.'²³ The drive against outsiders was what marked tribal rebellions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁴

By the 1980s, Ranajit Guha opposed what he termed as an 'elitist historiography'.²⁵ In his work, Guha asserted that the 'elite' dominated historiography of Indian nationalism was ridden with the prejudice that the development of nationalism as a consciousness, and the subsequent development of the Indian nation, were the accomplishments exclusively or predominantly of the elite. This kind of historiography was considered imperfect because it failed to acknowledge the contributions of the people through their own initiative, 'independently of the elite'. Moreover it judged 'mass articulation' of nationalism as a 'law and order problem' or as a response to elite actions and mobilizations.²⁶ Thus this historiography is all about the politics of the elite that ignored mass participation. Guha argued for the need to reject elitist historiography and recognize the co-existence and interaction of the elite and the subalterns as actors in the political process.

As a response to this call, the study of tribal rebellion took on a new turn. David Hardiman's work²⁷ is a valuable contribution to the development of the Subaltern perspective. David Hardiman has noted the distortion made in prevailing historiographies of Modern India. He said that these prevailing nationalistic or

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

²² K.S. Singh, *Dust, Storm and Hanging Mist: A Study of Birsa Munda and his movement in Chota Nagpur, 1874-1911*, Calcutta, 1966.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

²⁵ Ranajit Guha 'On some aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India' in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 1-8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁷ David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, Delhi, 1987.

socialistic historiographies did not fit well with movements started and carried on by 'adivasis', which according to Hardiman was a 'collective identity' born out of the shared experience of exploitation and subjugation by 'the outsider'.²⁸ Hardiman rejected the term 'tribe' because of its associated 'racist content' and its evolutionary connotation.²⁹ The problem with nationalist history-writing was the tendency to reject or relegate as insignificant adivasis' initiatives, and to pay attention only to the elites who appeared on the scene of adivasi movements at a later stage. Their place as the subject of their history was therefore denied to the adivasis, he asserted.³⁰ Thus Hardiman claimed that his work on the Devi movement, being part of the Subaltern Studies, was an attempt to 'write a history of the adivasis in which they are the subject'.³¹ Adivasi consciousness moved the adivasis to undertake political actions without manipulation from outside. According to Hardiman, their consciousness, imbued with religion, grew out of the historical experience of subjugation by outsiders. Tanika Sarkar in the *Subaltern Studies* Volume IV study of Jitu Santal's movement in Malda has also argued against this "external manipulation thesis" about tribal rebellions that perceived tribals and their agitations as the result of economic grievances or manipulation from outside.³² In her essay, Tanika Sarkar made an effort to analyze tribal rebellion 'as perceived by its participants'.³³ The movement was more than a rejection of the outsider as the Santals aspirations for a higher status necessitated a rejection of the oppressed Santal identity.

The Subaltern Studies approach, although powerful even today, has however been recently criticized. For example, Sarkar reexamines the Jitu Santal Movement to closely analyze Jitu's aspirations of social, cultural and religious changes for his community.³⁴ As she argues, the new Santal identity that Jitu aspired for was an 'innovation rather than acculturation'.³⁵ Sarkar further asserted that the Santals search for a new image, or the enterprise to refashion their image, was not a traditional but a

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³² Tanika Sarkar, 'Jitu Santal's Movement in Malda: A Study in Tribal Protest' in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi, 1985, p.139.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³⁴ Tanika Sarkar, *Rebellion as Modern Self Refashioning: A Santal Movement in Colonial Bengal* in Dhanajit Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta, *The Politics of belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi*, forthcoming from Routledge, 2011, pp. 1-27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

modern endeavor. To focus on the 'tribal' leader in studies of 'adivasi' movements was to repeat a problem integral to 'earlier studies of elite nationalism' that neglected the lower layers of the group being analyzed.³⁶ In the rebels' activity to invert existing hierarchies, 'principles of domination and subordination' as well as 'exclusions' and 'marginalisations' remained integral.³⁷ Thus, according to Sarkar the assumption that freedom and liberty were the ideologies behind tribal movements was no longer relevant.

In her study of the Tana Bhagat Movement, Sangeeta Dasgupta has moved beyond the conventional interpretation of tribal conflicts as an opposition between tribals and non-tribals, the less civilized against more civilized, or insiders versus outsiders. She refutes the general perception that tribal communities were united in their resistance against non-tribals because of the presumed 'inherently antagonistic' economic interests of the two broad groups.³⁸ Dasgupta argues that, though Tanas opposition to the Zamindars, banias and the British was significant, the movement must also be seen as a conflict that arose out of the internal hierarchy within the Oraon community, which she claimed was further intensified by the British with their administrative arrangements and agrarian legislations. As a marginalized group within Oraon society, the Tanas challenged both tribal and non-tribal elements that were responsible for their dependent and subordinate status. The Tana Bhagat Movement was therefore, an attempt of a marginal group of the Oraon society to reorder their world.³⁹

Turning to the Kuki Rebellion, historians in Manipur like Lal Dena have argued that the Kuki rebellion was the result of British domination over a people disinclined to control. It was, according to him, a 'short lived event', a 'watershed in the history of Manipur' which exposed the flaw in British administration over the hill territory of Manipur and resulted in the overall reorganization of the Manipur hill administration. In agreement with British official accounts about the rebellion, Dena points out that the rebellion starts with the chief's refusal to supply recruits for labour corps. And the cause of the rebellion lies in the wrong administrative approach of the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁸ Sangeeta Dasgupta, 'Reordering a World: The Tana Bhagat Movement, 1914-1919' *Studies in History*, 15,1, n.s.1999, pp. 1-41.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

colonial rulers, and the lack of personal contact between the ruler and the ruled which characterized British colonial administration.⁴⁰ This way of looking at the rebellion reflects the colonial idea of tribes as perpetually childlike who needed constant control.⁴¹

Other scholars like Chishti have studied the rebellion and concluded that it was a result of the Kuki's 'accumulated dissatisfaction with the local maladministration'. He stated that the Kukis strong dislike for labour recruitment, and the British officers' failure to sympathise with it, had caused the rebellion.⁴² This was a limitation of the Kuki rebellion to the British demand for coolie supply and the Kukis refusal to to obey the order. One needs however to review this opinion since even after the colonial state withdrew its demand for labour as a measure to suppress the rebellion, the rebels did not give in but remained defiant .

In his essay on the Kuki rebellion, Gautam Bhadra has noted that one of the problems of the revolt was that the rebellion was confined only to the Thadous. The other Kuki tribes remained loyal to the British and sent coolies for recruitment to France.⁴³ Bhadra differentiated the Thadous from the other Kuki tribes on the basis of their organisation and chieftaincies, their mode of production and migratory habits. In his opinion, Thadou ways of life clashed with British policy which opposed migration and the formation of new villages. This aspect of the rebellion, viz the grievances of the Thadou chiefs and communities, is not explained in the British version of the causes of the rebellion.⁴⁴ He also studies the rebellion as an analysis of the relations between ethnic groups in the hills and plains.

Chapter I will deal with the colonial representation of Manipur as a region and its inhabitants. Explicit in the colonial writings about Manipur and its people is the relationship between geographical spaces and people. In contrast to the valleys, the hills and forests were seen as tribals places. In an attempt to show that hill-plain dichotomy and tribe-caste distinction is however, a much more complicated one, this

⁴⁰ Lal Dena, *British Policy Towards Manipur, 1762-1947*, revised and enlarged edition Manipur, 2008, pp. 93-100.

⁴¹ Skaria, 'Shades of Wildness, Tribes, Caste and Gender in Central India', pp. 736-739.

⁴² Dr.S.M.A.W.Chishti, *Political Development in Manipur 1919-1949*, Delhi, 2005, p. 33.

⁴³ Gautam Bhadra, 'The Kuki(?) Uprising(1917-1919): Its Causes and Nature,' *Man In India*, Vol. 55,1 March, 1975.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

chapter will also look at the ways in which the 'Naga' and 'Kuki' identities were created by the administrators. In the distinctions that were drawn between the Nagas and the Kukis, it was paradoxically the parameters of difference between the hills and the plains that were reworked within the hills.

Chapter II then looks at missionary writings on the hill tribes. In Chapter II, I largely draw upon the writings of Rev. William Pettigrew and other missionaries in Manipur to show how the hill tribes were understood by the missionaries. The missionaries, I argue, played a part in the creation of ethnic identity amongst the hill people. Tracing the arrival of Pettigrew and other American Baptist missionaries in Manipur this chapter will look at mission works amongst the Kukis and Nagas and missionary encounter with the hill tribes. As the missionaries encountered the hill tribe, they promoted the Thadou dialect as the Kuki language, and therefore made the Thadou and Kuki identity almost synonymous. They promoted the Tangkhul dialect as the language for the Nagas.

Chapter III studies the Kuki Rebellion. In this chapter, I will be looking at the different ways in which the rebellion was appropriated by different groups and the modes of colonial representation of the rebellion. From the study of the Kuki rebellion and the participation of hill people in the rebellion, one can understand the differences in the relations between different groups, and thereby dismantle the settled perception that Nagas and Kukis were separate ethnic groups essentially hostile to each other.

For tracing colonial representations, I will specifically refer to accounts written by military officers like Captain R.B.Pemberton (1835) and Alexander Mackenzie (1884) and by Political Agents like McCulloch (1859), Robert Brown (1873), James Johnstone (1896). These records are present in the Manipur State Archive. I will also be looking at Dalton's ethnographic account 'Descriptive Ethnology', the Census reports and articles on the 'tribes' of Manipur written by Dr. G. Watt and Hodson. Chapter II will draw upon the writings of Rev. William Pettigrew, and look at the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Records located at - Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Chapter III will be based on Administrative Reports, account of military officers, tour diaries of Political Agents who were in Manipur during the uprising and the Foreign and Political Department files at the National Archives, New Delhi.

CHAPTER 1

MANIPURIS, NAGAS AND KUKIS IN COLONIAL RECORDS: SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS

The problem of a hill-valley division and of a divided population of tribals and non-tribals, are issues that can never be ignored in writings about Manipur. In a recent article 'Manipur: fractured land'⁴⁵, it has been pointed out that this division had resulted in ethnic tensions not just between hills and plain people, but amongst the hill tribes as well.⁴⁶ He also addresses the associated problem of a 'Manipuri identity' which today is almost synonymous with the identity of the dominant Meitei valley-dwellers whose Vaishnavite culture makes him easily identifiable as a part of mainstream India. The Manipuri identity is therefore not inclusive enough to include the hill inhabitants.⁴⁷

This paper will deal with the 'creation' of differences between inhabitants of the Manipur valley and that of the hills surrounding it. Particularly during British rule, the hill people were divided into the two broad divisions of Nagas and Kukis. The hills inhabitants, often different in language, customs or modes of dress were referred to as '*Haow*' by the Manipuris. The British however preferred to use the terms Nagas and Kukis. On what basis was this division within the hills made? The marks of distinction between the inhabitants of the hills and the plains, although not always clear, were many: all hill men were considered to be non-Hindus fond of eating flesh of animals and consuming liquor; the men 'lazy', while their women 'work hard'. The dichotomy between the hills and the plains were reworked in the context of the hills to once again structure differences within the hill inhabitants, between the Nagas and the Kukis.

By focusing on the tour diaries of Political Agents in Manipur and on ethnographic texts, this chapter will attempt to bring out differences in representations. I refer specifically to accounts written by military officers like Captain R. B. Pemberton (1835) and Alexander Mackenzie (1884); and Political

⁴⁵ Pradip Phanjoubam, 'Manipur: fractured land', in Geeti Sen (ed.) *Where the Sun Rises Where Shadows Fall: The North East*, 2006, pp. 275-287.

⁴⁶ Pradip Phanjoubam refers to the ethnic clash between the Nagas and Kukis in the early 1990s.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 278-282.

Agents like McCulloch (1859), Robert Brown (1873), James Johnstone (1896) and Hodson. Hodson also authored ethnographical monographs on the Meiteis and Nagas, all of which were published in the early twentieth century. William Shaw wrote on the 'Thadou Kukis' for *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1928, whom I shall refer to later. Articles on the tribes of Manipur were written by Dr. G. Watt and Hodson for the *Journal of Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*. Dalton published his ethnographic account '*Descriptive Ethnology*' (1872) on Bengal; and the *Census* reports on Manipur referred to traditions and customs that had been recorded by Rev. Pettigrew, the pioneer missionary in Manipur whom I shall refer to later.

From these varied and sometimes conflicting perception and description, one can argue, the arbitrariness of the colonial constructions of categories and its classifications of the colonized becomes apparent. Yet, differences drawn between communities could also occasionally collapse. As Damodaran has argued in the case of Chotanagpur, even though 'racial' and 'evolutionary ideas of tribes' dominated colonial representation.⁴⁸ The first section titled 'Geographical Spaces and Characterizing People' is about the link that colonial officers drew between places and people in their understanding of the differences between the inhabitants of the valley and the hills of Manipur. The following section is an attempt to identify the differences drawn between the hill and valley inhabitants based on their 'Religion and Customs', while the last section discusses the contrasts in 'livelihoods and economy' of the communities.

SECTION I

GEOGRAPHICAL SPACES AND CHARACTERIZING PEOPLE

Colonial accounts of Manipur and their description of the place reflect the perception of the hills as a 'wild zone' that was different from the valley of Manipur. In the eye of the colonial observers, the territory of Manipur was a region of contrasts.

⁴⁸ "British attitudes towards indigenous peoples in India in the nineteenth century were not unchanging or homogenous." Damodaran, 'Colonial Constructions of the 'Tribe' in India: The Case of Chotanagpur', *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol.XXXVIII, No.1. January 2006, p. 55.

‘The tangled forest covered hills’ were sharply different from the ‘open cultivated plains’. In such distinct landscapes of Manipur, the people too would be different. While the inhabitants of the plains were the ‘civilized Hindus’, the inhabitants of the hills were the ‘barbarous tribes’.

The earliest description of Manipur was given by Lieutenant R.B. Pemberton. The British officer had accompanied the Meitei prince, Gambhir Singh in 1825, on an expedition to drive away the Burmese from the valley of Manipur.⁴⁹ Pemberton felt that British ignorance of the Eastern Frontier had resulted in the loss of life and resources that was unparalleled in the annals of Indian warfare.⁵⁰ Based on information that he had gathered in the course of the military expeditions and explorations that he had undertaken during the Burmese War, in his *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India* printed in 1835, Pemberton furnished information about the countries on the Eastern Frontier and the people he had encountered. Contact with British further increased once the British Political Agent was stationed in Manipur in 1835. Lieutenant George Gordon was appointed the first Political Agent in Manipur.⁵¹ This marked the beginning of British control in Manipur.⁵² In his report, R.B. Pemberton described the territory of Manipur in 1835 thus:

The territory comprised within the boundaries thus specified, occupies an area of 7,000 square miles, of which a valley ... of rich alluvial soil, constitutes the centre portion; the remainder is formed by an encircling zone of hilly and mountainous country inhabited by various tribes, who have all been brought under subjection to the paramount authority of Muneepoor ... the valley ... constitutes by far the most valuable portion of this state.⁵³

The valley then was the ‘centre’ of Manipur, the ‘valuable’ portion of the state. It was the locus of dominant authority that brought the hill inhabitants under subjection. The hilly and mountainous parts of the state were seen as a different space from the valley. While the hills were covered with forests, “that portion of the eastern

⁴⁹ Lal Dena ‘Assertion of Resurgent Manipur, 1826 -1834’ in Lal Dena (ed.) *History of Modern Manipur (1826-1949)*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 12-13.

⁵⁰ Captain R.B Pemberton, *Report on the North East Frontier of India*. Calcutta, 1835, p.2.

⁵¹ Lal Dena, *British Policy Towards Manipur, 1762-1947*, revised and enlarged edition, Imphal, Manipur, 2008, p. 25.

⁵² N.Joy Kumar Singh, ‘Political Agency 1835-1890’, pp. 31-47, In Lal Dena ed., *History of Modern Manipur (1826-1949)*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 31.

⁵³ Pemberton, *Report on the North East Frontier of India*, pp. 21-22.

face which fronts the valley, has on the contrary, been almost entirely cleared of forest, and is annually cultivated with rice and cotton by the Nagas, who reside upon it.”⁵⁴ The valley and the hills were also marked by different vegetations-garden fruits and forests trees respectively as indicated in the following observation.

Throughout the valley, the low detached hills have been found uniformly favorable to the culture of garden fruits, and the pineapple which in Manipur attains a degree of excellence not surpassed in any part of the world, is very extensively cultivated...⁵⁵

This luxuriant vegetation comprised of “the noblest varieties of forest trees, common both to tropical and colder climates ... no spots in India, in which the products of the forests are more varied and magnificent.” In contrast, the valley itself is perfectly free of forests though every village was surrounded by a grove of fruit trees.⁵⁶

William Mc Culloch first came to Manipur as an Assistant Political Agent in 1840. He became the Political Agent in Manipur between 1845 and 1867, with a year’s intermission. Married to a Manipuri lady, he was said to have acquired the most intimate knowledge of the state and its inhabitants during these years.⁵⁷ He described the hill as a difficult and steep and wild terrain where no roads exist. He wrote:

To all the villages the ascents are laborious, and to some of them from the great steepness excessively so, but throughout the hills occupied by the songboos, I am not aware of there being any roads made by them to facilitate general travelling, or for the convenience of communication between villages. Their roads are mere paths overgrown with jungle except in the neighborhood of their villages, where it is cut down, and these paths being selected not for the ease of travelling by them, but for their directions are generally over the steepest parts. A hill man does not appreciate an easy ascent if it be circuitous... who prefer the steep ascent of the rough face of the hill to the gradual but circuitous one of the road, and these even with loads on their backs.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Hodson, *The Meitheids*, Introduction by C.J Lyall.

⁵⁸ William McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes, with a comparative vocabulary of the Munnipore and other languages*, Delhi, 1859, pp. 43-44.

It is a similar-perception that is exhibited in yet another description made by Robert Brown, the Political Agent in Manipur, in as late as the 1870s:

...the territory which constitutes the native states of Manipur consists of a large extent of hill country and of the valley proper of Manipur the scenery in the valley is very uninteresting and monotonous; rice-fields, swamps, small muddy rivers, bamboo clumps, barren hills of low elevation, common looking villages,-these are the principal features met with: presence of the varying outline of the hills surrounding the valley, however, relieves all this, and redeems what would otherwise be *tame* and *uninteresting* (emphasis mine).⁵⁹

Thus while the valley exhibited a monotonous and uninteresting scenery, the hills in contrast, presented a 'wild' and 'interesting' landscape.

Once the hills were validated as wild spaces, the inhabitants were referred to as 'hill tribes' who needs to be conquered if they were not already subjugated. Sivaramakrishnan has suggested that 'zones of anomaly', were marked by 'ecological social distinctions' and the "social formations that fleshed out the frontier came to be recognized through a discourse of marginality and difference."⁶⁰ An indication of this is the way in which 'paramount authority' was attributed to the communities in the valley. Sketching out the population of the valley, McCulloch wrote, "This population is composed of different classes. The principal is the Meithei, next the Phoongnai, after which the Tengkul, the Ayokpa the Kei, the Loe and Mussulman."⁶¹ All of them comprised the 'Muneepoories'. The hill people, in contrast were 'mountaineers with striking peculiarities', or were 'objects of much interest'.⁶² They were divided into innumerable clans and sections, each having slight differences in language, customs or modes of dress, and were referred to as '*Haow*' by the Manipuris. The British however worked with the terms 'Nagas' and 'Kukis'. Names of the tribes grouped as the Nagas were, the Kowpoe, Jatic, Kolya, Angamese or Gnamei, Tankhool or Loohoopa, and the Murring. The Kukis comprised the Khongjais, Koms,

59 R.Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur and The Hill Territory Under Its Rule 1873*, Calcutta 1874, p. 3.

60 K.Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forest: State Making and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 48.

61 McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes*, p. 11.

62 *Ibid.* p. 42.

Chiru, Anal, Namfow tribes.⁶³ The numerous clans of the Kukis were classed under two main heads – the ‘old’ and the ‘New’ Kukis. “The former arrived in Manipur hills about eighty-five years ago” while the latter came “about thirty-five years back.”⁶⁴ These Naga and Kuki tribes were then described separately in colonial accounts.

The contrast drawn on people belonging to geographically different spaces was now reinforced along the lines of race. McCulloch said that no greater contrast between the plain and hill people could be conceived than their difference in physical appearance. “The comparatively tall and prominently featured people of the western plains” were different from the “low nosed inhabitants of these hills.”⁶⁵ He described the plain inhabitants as follows:

The general good muscular development of the Munniporees, who, though short in stature are usually well made, strong and active. In youth they are usually good looking, but their good looks, more especially the women, they very soon loose. From the heavy labour the women are subject to such a result might have been expected; but as the men do almost nothing, their early coarseness must have some other cause.⁶⁶

It is significant to realize how McCulloch links this sharp physical contrast between the people with their habitat – the plains and hills – Paradoxically, McCulloch concluded that the plain inhabitants were descendents of the hill tribes, and pointed out to linguistic affinity as an indication. The languages spoken by the hill tribes, McCulloch observed, were in their pure form and were very similar. The language of the people in the valley, united under the name Meithei, had an apparent likeness to the languages of the hill tribes.⁶⁷ Explicit in McCulloch’s representation was the influence of ideas generated by the Ethnological Society of London in the 1840s. Difference was explained by emphasizing the “affinities between physically dissimilar groups” through the comparison of languages.⁶⁸ Interestingly, McCulloch described the people as hills and plain inhabitants, significantly avoiding the

⁶³ Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur and The Hill Territory Under Its Rule 1873*, pp. 15-56.

⁶⁴ Report on the Census of Assam for 1881, Calcutta, 1883, p. 154.

⁶⁵ McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes*, p. 42.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁸ George W. Stocking Jr, ‘What’s in a Name? The Origins of the Royal Anthropological Institute (1837-71) *Man*, New Series, Vol. 6 No. 3. Sep., 1971, p. 372.

distinction of the hill tribes into Nagas and Kukis and choose instead to speak of them by their names. As mentioned earlier, it is interesting to note that he married a Manipuri lady, from a family of the Manipur raja Nur Singh. But still one can see that as a colonial administrator, the privileging of the plain inhabitants as superior was evident in McCulloch's account.

In the late 1850s in Europe there was a change in anthropology. This was a shift from a 'humanitarian and environmental approach to racial differences' towards a 'strictly physical and harshly racial approach to human differences'. Writings that rejected the idea of human equality emerged as well.⁶⁹ The influence of this idea was seen in the writings of Dr. Robert Brown who succeeded McCulloch as Political Agent from June 1867-1875. His book "*Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur and the Hill Territory under Its Rule*" printed by the Government at Calcutta in 1874 was distributed widely. In fact this was a published document of his administrative report of 1868-1869. With the Meitei Raja, he concentrated on the improvement of the administration of Manipur.⁷⁰

Not saying anything about his agreement or disagreement with McCulloch, Brown reproduced the opinion of 'the upper and learned classes of the Manipuri' who denied their origin from the hill tribes surrounding the valley. They stated that they always belonged to the valley, and had always been a separate race of Hindus'.⁷¹ The emphasis that Brown put on the details of caste and class divisions in his representation of valley population is quite telling.⁷²

Hill people, according to Robert Brown, were inferior and uncivilized when compared to the plain inhabitants. He wrote:

... the tribes generally are of an inferior order of civilization; their manual productions are few, rude and unimportant; they have no written character of any kind, and their general intelligence, except in rare instances, is very low. Their

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 373-374.

⁷⁰ N.Joy Kumar Singh, '*Political Agency 1835-1890*', p. 41.

⁷¹ R.Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur and The Hill Territory Under Its Rule 1873*, Calcutta, 1874, p. 57.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

reputed truthfulness is believed to be much exaggerated, and the more intelligent of them can lie when occasion serves.⁷³

Brown differed from McCulloch in his depiction of the hills and plain population as two separate and different races, and further emphasized the difference amongst the hill tribes. In the account written by Brown he described the plain people as follows:

Although the general facial characteristics of the Manipuri are of the Mongolian type, there is a great diversity of feature amongst them, some of them showing a regularity approaching the Arian type. Among both men and women the stature is very various, differing about as much as is found among Europeans. Some of them are very good looking and fair. It is not uncommon to meet with girls with brownish black hair, brown eyes, fair complexions, straight noses, and rosy cheeks. The Manipuri's are decidedly a muscular race, some of the men particularly so; they are generally spare in habit of body, and fat people are rare. They have good chests and well formed limbs.⁷⁴

The plain people were described as being akin to the Aryan race, their stature varied as found amongst the Europeans; they had fair complexion and were good looking. Comparing the physical features of the plain and hill inhabitants, the former were attributed a superior racial order than the latter that were said to be in their pure and primitive condition

when one fairly comes into contact with the various classes of hill-men in Manipur territory in their pure and primitive conditions ... a purely Mongolian cast of features is rare, and the majority of the individuals constituting the various hill tribes, whether Nagas, Kukis or Maring do not have the flat nose and well-marked oblique eye characteristic of that race. This shape of eye is, perhaps, the most persistent feature amongst them, showing their probable Mongolian origin; but even this is by no means well marked, and is common to the Manipuri as to the hill men. Amongst both the Naga and Kuki tribes the stature varies considerably. The Naga is generally the taller of the two, especially the Tangkhul and Angami. The usual run of Kukis of all the tribes are of medium and frequently of low stature, and amongst those of low height are found the long armed individuals, which length of limb is said by some

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57; the term Manipuri refers to the Meithei inhabitants of the plains.

observers to be to be a characteristics of the Kuki race... however...even amongst the Kukis low stature is not by any means a rule, some of the tallest men seen in these hills have been Kukis of the Khongjai tribe.⁷⁵

Highly notable is the racial tone in Brown's description and his use of words like Aryan race, Mongolian race, skin colour, and good looks, all indicative of a racial approach determined by an importance given to physical attributes.

Showing the dissimilarity of the hills and plains in their physical characteristics, Brown went on to describe the differences within the hill inhabitants in physical structure. This marker of difference between the hill and plain people was now used to distinguish between the Nagas and Kukis as evident in the description of the Nagas and Kukis. Facial characteristics of the 'Kowpoe' tribe of the Nagas were observed to be:

... various as amongst the other hill clans; occasionally an almost purely Mongolian cast of countenance will be observed, to be succeeded by one closely approaching the Aryan type. The stature is moderate, and sometimes very short men are seen; tall men are rare; they have generally well shaped slender figures, but no very prominent muscular development. Some of them have good looks, and not very frequently the younger girls are prepossessing in appearance.⁷⁶

The Angami Nagas were found to "possess a greater regularity than most of the other Naga tribes, and the Mongolian features were scarcely at all marked. In general facial characteristics they more resemble the Maori of New Zealand than any other tribe on the frontier. They are generally tall, of spare frames, but straight and muscular ... lower limbs ... better developed."⁷⁷ The "Tankhools" were said to resemble the Angami and were again a "tall race of men with large heads and heavy stolid features as a rule; ... and some of them are remarkably muscular."⁷⁸ The Nagas were seen to have less marked out Mongolian features. Brown rebuts the linguistic affinity between the hill tribes and asserted that "it is almost unnecessary to say that the language of the Naga and Kuki is entirely different."⁷⁹ Linguistic affinity of plains

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁷⁹ Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur and The Hill Territory Under Its Rule 1873*, p. 17.

and hill people was ignored in the descriptions of the people and even when linguistic connection was acknowledged, Nagas and Kukis were recognized to be different as indicated in the writing of J. Ware Edgar on the Naga tribes in 1871. He wrote:

I have examined the dialects spoken by all the people known to us as Nagas...they are branches of one language which itself is closely connected with Burmese, Munniporee, and probably with Chinese. Another member of the same great family of languages is that spoken by the tribe called by us Kookies. Indeed there is more resemblance between some dialects of Kookie and some of Naga than there is between the more widely differing branches of either tongue. Notwithstanding this, there can be no doubt that there is a sharp distinction between the people whom we include in the group which we call Naga, and those who form the group which we call Kookie. They clearly feel it, although neither group has any common name to include all its sub-divisions.

In 1911, the census enquiry to determine the race of people was based on Herr Baelz's assertion that "the appearance of blue patches on the Sacral Region of infants is a proof of the existence of a Mongolian Strain." According to Baelz "every Chinese, every Korean, Japanese and Malay is born with a dark blue patch of irregular shape in the lower sacral region." The spots were found to be very common among Lushais, Khasis, and Garos while not very prevalent on Naga and Manipuri infants.⁸⁰

Physical features of the Kukis also were diverse like the Nagas

...and one standard cannot be laid down for all; the stature also varies, and tall men alternate with short, but the middle height is that most frequently met with. Their legs and arms are occasionally very muscular, and they are capable of carrying heavy weights....The Kom Kukis resemble the Khongjai Kukis in appearance and as amongst the Khongjais, 'tall men are seen ... although they are usually of a medium height. They are well built in person, but more slender than the Khongjais as a rule, though some of them are squat and very muscular.'⁸¹

The importance given to physical characteristics can once again be seen in General Edward Tuite Dalton's report. An administrator trained in anthropology and

⁸⁰ J. McSwiney, *Census of India, 1911 Report Vol.III, Assam, Shillong, 1912, p. 127.*

⁸¹ Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur and The Hill Territory Under Its Rule 1873, p. 48, and p. 53.*

whose writings greatly contributed to the *Asiatic Society of Bengal* his work 'Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal' (1872) was the result of a proposal in 1866 "to bring together, in one exhibition, typical example of the races of the Old world, to be made the subject of scientific study."⁸² Dalton found variations in the physical characteristics of the Kukis. According to him, there were considerable varieties in the physiognomy of the Kukis. While some were represented as very dark, others were found to have a fair complexion and 'not darker than swarthy Europeans'. Dalton further stated that although the Kukis were said to be like the Manipuris in physiognomy. The majority of the Kukis were said to be "having strongly marked Mongolian features with flat faces and thick lips."⁸³ Thus, in contrast to the 'handsome' Manipuris or Nagas, the facial appearance of the Kukis was represented as 'unpleasant'. In physical appearance it was vaguely concluded that Kukis were shorter, more muscular than the Nagas who were close to the Aryan type with good looks.

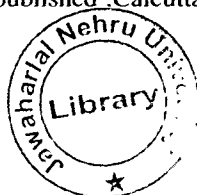
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We can see that in the eyes of the colonial administrators, better physical structures distinguish the Manipuris of the valley from the hill tribes. Some see this distinction as the influence of environment and trace them to a common origin while others with the rise of anthropology in the west, see them as a separate race in which a superior racial order – the Aryan type defined the valley inhabitants. The hill tribes were perceived as inferior, 'in their pure and primitive condition' with the Kukis particularly more so. The racial contrast between the hill-plain inhabitants was used to separate the hill tribes into two broad groups and what marked out the plain inhabitants become the comparative marker of distinction among the hill tribes. Thus in colonial classification the Kukis emerged as different from the valley people in greater degree than the Nagas. The Kukis were perceived as the hardier race good for carrying load. This perception of a "more muscular Kuki" persisted in the Dun's Gazetteer compiled in 1886. He claimed that the Tangkhul tribe of the Nagas were particularly muscular or athletic and were inferior as carriers compared to the Kukis.⁸⁴

⁸² Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, April, 1866, in E.T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, 1872, reprinted, Calcutta 1960, Preface. Also quoted in Meena Radhakrishna, 'Colonialism, Evolutionism and Anthropology-A Critique of The History of Ideas 1850-1930', *Occasional Papers on History and Society*, 3rd Series, No.XIX, June, 1997, p. 25.

⁸³ Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 51.

⁸⁴ Captain E.W Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, first published Calcutta 1886, Reprinted, Delhi, 1975, pp. 28-29.



Ghosh has argued that in the market for 'primitive' labour, price for labour depended on the aboriginality of the coolie. Thus the market for coolie labour both consumes and produce differences in degree of primitiveness among the coolies in tea-plantation.⁸⁵ The Kukis were identified as more suitable to be hill porters according to their physical features differentiating the hill people based on the degree of primitiveness in racial components.

SECTION II

RELIGION AND CUSTOMS

The great contrast in personal appearance between the people of hills and valley was, according to McCulloch, equaled "by that between the manners, customs and ideas of the two people."⁸⁶ One way of classifying colonized society was to differentiate the people as 'caste' and 'tribe'.⁸⁷ Based on distinguishing its inhabitants from Hindu castes, certain spaces were made into 'tribal places'.⁸⁸ Drawing upon this idea, this section looks at how the hill inhabitants were distinguished from the civilized Hindus of the valley. Their paganism, lack of cleanliness and violent nature were characteristics which differentiated the hill tribes from the plain Hindus or 'castes'. The difference between hill and plain communities in religion was emphasized by Captain Dun in the Gazetteer of Manipur. He wrote:

As the State of Manipur consists of both tangled forest-covered hills and open cultivated plain, so do its people include both civilized Hindus and barbarous tribes. The name Manipur is only applicable, properly speaking, to the Hindu dwellers of the plains. The wild tribes are divided generically into the two classes of Naga and Kuki. There is not apparently any racial difference between the Hindus and the savages –

⁸⁵ Kaushik Ghosh, 'A Market for Aboriginality: Primitivism and Race Classification in the Indentured Labour Market of Colonial India' in Bhadra, Prakash and Tharu (eds.), *Subaltern Studies X, Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 35.

⁸⁶ McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes*, p. 42.

⁸⁷ Ajay Skaria, "Shades of Wildness, Tribes, Caste and Gender in Central India" *Journal of Asian Studies* No.3 Vol.56, Aug, 1997, p. 729.

⁸⁸ Sivaramakrishnan, *Modern Forest: State Making and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India*, p. 85.

the dwellers in the plains and the dwellers in the hills – but only a difference of religion.⁸⁹

The religious ideas of the hill-men were described as “something peculiarly savage and absurd.”⁹⁰ The ‘savage’ form of belief termed Animism was not a religion⁹¹ it involved the propitiation of evil spirits that caused human misery, and was thus “the religion of the primitive man.”⁹² Different from Hindus, the hill people were, then, seen as ‘primitives’. As ‘wild folks’, they remained outside the bounds of Hinduism. Accordingly their habits and customs were different.

Four diaries however point towards a modified image of the Manipuris. The Manipuris were seen as superstitious and ignorant. An officer accounted how a prisoner escaped easily because of a cowardly and superstitious Manipuri guard. A convict escaped from jail. The outside sentry, a somewhat timid recruit, instead of firing, called out he had seen a demon, and before any further action was possible, the man had got off. “The jail is near a pond, and the Manipuris have a fable that it is inhabited by demons.”⁹³ Moreover some of their manners were found to be against Hindu customs. As the Political Agent, Lieutenant Maxwell inspected the rice fields, he noticed that ‘contrary to Hindu Custom’, cows were used by the people for ploughing. He further reported that “some busy body in the Chirap Court has sent round an order, prohibiting the practice; but fortunately no one pays attention to the Chirap Court’s orders unless countersigned by me. Only barren cows or animals past bearing are utilized; and I think the people are wise to make the most use of these otherwise useless animals.”⁹⁴ The Manipuris were thus not orthodox Hindus who adhered firmly to what were classified as Hindu customs in the 1890s. As Skaria has argued, “the difference between caste and tribes was not, for most British officials,

⁸⁹ Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, p. 13.

⁹⁰ B.C. Allen, *Census of India, Assam Report 1901*, Vol.IV, Shillong, 1902, p. 46.

⁹¹ ‘Animism’ was described in the Census as follows: “In some sort the philosophy of the uncivilized man in virtue of which he constructs for himself a picture of the world so far has an interest in it. It is occupied with the soul of the living man as well as with the souls of living creatures, and even lifeless objects...this soul stuff becomes the object of worship...animism is the key to an understanding of ancestor worship and of all that is commonly called heathen superstition...” See, Mc Swiney, *Census of India, Assam Report 1911*, Vol.III, p. 36.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁹³ Diary of Lieutenant - colonel H. St. P. Maxwell, I.S.C., C.S.I., Political Agent in Manipur and superintendent of the state (hereafter Maxwell Diary), No. 41 of 1895.

⁹⁴ Maxwell Diary, No.24 of 1895.

one between the civilized and the wild; it was rather about different forms of wildness... ”⁹⁵ Some sections of the Nagas too were proselytized by the Manipuris. A colonial officer came upon Hindu village of Nagas in his tours. As he wrote:

I passed through two villages called Tanjing and Saiyang. The former is now a Hindu village, having taken the thread and discarded the consumption of pigs and poultry. A few years back the two villages intermarried and enjoyed festivals together. The latter still remains Naga, and has no intention of proselytizing. One way and another, the Manipuris were constantly Hinduising the hill tribes, and, I fancy, came from the same stock. The Kamhows were in the habit of raiding Saiyang, and the Darbar had a *thanah* posted in the village.⁹⁶

There were other Naga villages that gave up tribal habits and emulated the Manipuris although they did not become Hindus. A Naga village of ten houses called Karang was described by the political officer as one such village. He said, ‘The people came originally from the Tankul hills, but have given up all Tankul habits, and are quiet a class of their own. The unmarried girls wear their hair Manipuri fashion; but I fear the village will soon die out, as the people are unable to find wives outside their own small community.’⁹⁷

The hill people were observed to be ‘wild and violent’, living in constant feud and war with its neighbour.⁹⁸ While in the valley serious crime was not common, the “sense of the sanctity of human life was still somewhat undeveloped” among the hill men.⁹⁹ Dalton, who began his description of the Kukis with a reproduction of how they were first noticed by Surgeon McCrea in the volume of the Asiatic Researches published in 1799, talked of the Kukis as a “nation of hunters and warriors” engaged in hostile expeditions against others, and who spared none except children when they were successful.¹⁰⁰ Their belief in life after death, he pointed out, had made them value murder as a prerequisite for happiness in the future. For the Kukis, “he who in this life commits most murders obtains the greatest happiness in the next.”¹⁰¹ Dalton

⁹⁵ Skaria, ‘Shades of Wildness, Tribes, Caste and Gender in Western India’, p. 727.

⁹⁶ Maxwell Diary, No.5 of 1896.

⁹⁷ Maxwell Diary, No. 10 of 1896.

⁹⁸ McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes*, p. 43.

⁹⁹ The Imperial Gazetteer of India Vol. XVII, Oxford, 1908, p. 194.

¹⁰⁰ E.T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 50.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*,

described the Kuki idea of paradise. As a place abundant in rice and game – “the happy hunting fields, all the enemies he had killed will be in attendance on him as slaves, and the animals of all kinds that he has eaten with his friends will live again as his farm stock.”¹⁰² This system of belief was seen to encourage ‘unbounded hospitality’.¹⁰³ The Kukis, as the ‘most turbulent of the hill tribes’, were slotted at the lowest rung in the scale of civilization.¹⁰⁴

The Nagas, on the other hand, were described as more peaceful, a tribe who suppressed their passion to maintain order. Dalton wrote:

Disputes between people of the same clan become feuds and lead to intestine wars, but the very great misery that this entails on the community acts as a deterrent. Passions are repressed by fear of the consequences of giving them vent...order...thus generally maintained from the very absence of any rule or legitimate power to enforce it.¹⁰⁵

Yet in tour diaries written by colonial officials working in the field, Kukis were seen as nobler than the Nagas. The former were perceived as ‘kindly’ in contrast to being portrayed as the ‘most savage’ of the hill tribes. The political officer gave an interesting account about the Kukis:

Another severe punishment carried out here was for the accused to be taken to the jungle behind the village and given a small supply of food, and told to make him or herself scare. To save his or her life, the accused had to make for the hills, where he or she was detained by the hill people, mostly of the Kuki race. The Kukis though a revengeful people, are in some respects of a kindly nature, and many of these accused persons were permitted to pass on unmolested to the Kubo Valley where they can be found to this day.¹⁰⁶

The Kukis, unless provoked, were also described as a ‘quiet and inoffensive’ people. Mr. Cole, Assistant to the Political Agent who rode out to Shugunu to enquire into a dispute between the police and the Kukis in 1896, informed the Political Agent stationed in the valley as follows:

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰⁴ Allen, *Naga Hills and Manipur: Socio-economic History*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁶ Maxwell Diary, No. 5 of 1896.

... The police havildar at Shugunu had a dispute about some firewood with some Kukis of Gelmol ... a Kuki being struck ... hit the havildar, who ran to the guard-house and the *sipahis* commenced to fire. Two Kukis were wounded, one severely. Gelmol ... a small Kuki village ... the inhabitants are a quiet inoffensive people.¹⁰⁷

L.O Clark described a Kuki village, which was allowed to remain within the grazing reserve, as 'a large and well conducted village and does no harm where it is.'¹⁰⁸ The Kukis' image of savagery was considered to be a consequence of Naga suspicion. One officer reported an incident in which the Kukis were depicted as 'old enemy' of the Nagas. The Kukis were therefore a 'ready suspect' whenever atrocities happened. He wrote,

A Naga woman of Makui was killed lately not far from the village, and her head taken. The villagers suspect some Kukis. Makui is Kabui Naga village, near Kaitamabi, and was raided by Naga Hills District Kukis in March 1891. The Kukis were heavily fined in money and guns, and, I fancy, the Makui people are always ready to suspect their old enemies who are now residing in Manipur territory.¹⁰⁹

The Manipuris, in contrast, were characterized as a 'comparatively refined race'. According to Dalton, what made the Manipuris a group of 'civilized and polite people' when compared with the 'hill savages' was their association with Hinduism. Well versed in portions of Hindu Mythology, the Manipuris were "people of some education". As Hindus, the Manipuris were distinguished for their habits of "cleanliness and neatness in their persons, habiliments and dwellings."¹¹⁰ The officer of the 1911 Census operations in Assam reported that the valley people in Manipur were 'Hindus so called' that placed them within the group or caste that worship the gods of the Brahmans.¹¹¹ Conversion to Hinduism and the subsequent abandonment of unclean customs or tribal language was seen as a step towards improvement from being tribal. It was further reported that only those who returned their caste as

¹⁰⁷ Maxwell Diary, No. 20 of 1896.

¹⁰⁸ Tour Diary of L.O. Clarke, Political Agent in Manipur, 1923-1927, Acc. No.1, R-1/S-A, MSA.

¹⁰⁹ Maxwell Diary, No.38 of 1895.

¹¹⁰ Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 54.

¹¹¹ McSwiney, *Census of India, Report 1911*, Vol.III, p. 39.

Kshatriya were shown as Manipuris.¹¹² Thus conversion to Hinduism as a marker of civilization set apart the valley inhabitants of Manipur from the hill tribes.¹¹³

Hinduization was thus seen as a civilizing influence for wild people.¹¹⁴ “As Hindus” the Manipuris according to Dalton “affected the necessary amount of abstinence in food.”¹¹⁵ The Manipuris who lived like the ‘wild Nagas’ in the past were said to have changed their diet due to the introduction of Hinduism that forbids the Manipuris to eat animal flesh, drink milk, spirituous liquor or intoxicants.¹¹⁶ The hill tribes, in contrast to the Manipuris, did not observe any dietary restriction: “among this barbarous and brutal people scarce anything that has life comes amiss, and they may take up with a dog, since they consider toads, lizards, and even the flesh of the tiger as a dainty.”¹¹⁷ Portrayed as filthy and unclean in their dietary habits by colonial rulers, the hill people differed from the plain people – the hill-man will eat almost any kind of animal, including even the carcass of an elephant or a rat¹¹⁸ – reflects the image of the hill people as scavengers. Dalton described the Kukis as “dog-eating, dirty, Kuki savage.”¹¹⁹ ‘Zu’ or rice beer was their favorite drink. While the Naga drink was described as “very acid, pleasant enough but thin”, the Kuki brewed a jungle plant to make ‘strong’ zu.¹²⁰ Moreover Kukis were seen to have the habit of taking a sip of tobacco juice which was of a ‘very pungent and penetrating’ odour. This habit was found only among Nagas who were in touch with the Kukis.¹²¹

Even the marriage customs of the Nagas and Kukis were primitive. Marriage amongst the Kukis and Nagas was seen as evidence of the primitive practice of wife capture. Wrestling that took place between young men of the bride’s clan or tribe, and

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹¹³ “The valley society was observed as a, singular oasis of comparative civilization and organized society... in the midst of a congeries of a barbarous people...the civilized people...occupied the central settled and organized region...nearly akin to the wild folks who inhabit the hills which enclose the alluvial plain ... Manipur ... taken into the pale of Hinduism ... imposed upon itself burdensome restrictions of caste and ritual ...”. See Hodson, *The Meitheis*, p. xvii, introduction by C.J. Lyall.

¹¹⁴ Vinita Damodaran, Colonial Constructions of the ‘Tribe’ in India: The Case of Chotanagpur, *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol.xxxviii, No.1. January 2006, p. 51.

¹¹⁵ Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 54.

¹¹⁶ Hodson, *The Meitheis*, p. 47.

¹¹⁷ This is the remark of a Goldsmith on another people quoted by William McCulloch in McCulloch 1859, p. 72.

¹¹⁸ Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur and The Hill Territory Under Its Rule 1873*, p. 19.

¹¹⁹ Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 50.

¹²⁰ T.C Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, first printed, 1911, reprinted in India 1974, p. 61.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

champions of the bridegroom's village, were regarded as "survival from the times when women were systematically captured and made the wives of their captors."¹²² Amongst the Kukis, what survived from marriage by capture was the practice of pelting the bridal party with mud as they went to the bridegroom's house.¹²³ The established idea in the late nineteenth century was also the assumption that the component units of primeval human society were matriarchal.¹²⁴ As the following report suggests, the Naga custom pertaining to child birth was seen as an evidence of transition from 'matriarchal' to 'patriarchal' system:

The custom of the couvades seems to imply a mysterious, magical and sympathetic connection between father and child, such that if the father infringes certain rules, the child suffers. Some anthropologists find the origins of the custom in the transition from the original matriarchal system to the patriarchal. Amongst the Maram Nagas of Manipur the husband of a woman in advanced pregnancy is averse from going about at night lest he should meet the god Shapura who might return with him and injure the child and its mother: after birth the father must not go out ten days in a high wind or cloudy weather for fear that wind god might injure the child.¹²⁵

SECTION III

LIVELIHOOD AND ECONOMY OF THE HILL AND VALLEY COMMUNITIES

The constitution of some group as 'authentic tribes' and others as 'not quite primitive' in the case of the Santals and Paharias marks the establishment of colonial rule in the Rajmahal hill areas in the late eighteenth-century. In an analysis of the construction of the Santals as a 'tribe', it has already been pointed out that that colonial rule was a regime which judged the 'primordality' of different peoples.¹²⁶ Drawing upon this idea, this section will look at the descriptions of the livelihood in the valley and hills and show that permanent cultivation and settled villages marked

¹²² T.C. Hodson, 'The Native Tribes of Manipur.' *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol.31, Jan.-Jun., 1901, p. 305.

¹²³ J. Shakespear, 'The Kuki-Lushai Clans', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 39 (Jul. - Dec., 1909), p. 381.

¹²⁴ Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: transformations of an illusion*, p. 6.

¹²⁵ Mc Swiney, 'Census of India 1911 Assam Report Vol.III, p. 76.

¹²⁶ Prathama Banerjee, *Politics of Time: 'Primitives' and History-writing in a Colonial Society*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 120-131.

out the plains and its inhabitants as superior and more civilized than the hill people. Also, the same binaries that emerged separated the Nagas and Kukis in the hills as the latter were recognized as more primitive.

The contrast in hill-plain economy and livelihood was an important marker of distinction in colonial classification of people. This again is related to landscapes as the mode of cultivation practiced by the people differed with the area they inhabited. On the one hand, the inhabitants of the 'open cultivated plains' were seen as different from the inhabitants of the 'wild and rugged mountains', an area less suitable for permanent cultivation. On the other, we shall see that within the hills, those tribes who inhabited the hills with an easy slope to the valley suitable for terrace cultivation were differentiated from the tribes who practiced shifting cultivation mainly at the top of the hills.

Valley and hill people were ranked according to the four-stage model of economic progress constructed in the West.¹²⁷ A primitive mode of cultivation, practices of hunting and food gathering, and the absence of commerce marked out the hills and their inhabitants as different from the settled agriculturalist inhabiting the fertile alluvial plains. Measured by these criteria, the hills and valley inhabitants of Manipur in colonial descriptions were assigned their place in the ladder of civilization. The hill tribes were again slotted at a lower level than the plain inhabitants.¹²⁸

Officials' views on the two different cultivation practices in the hills – terrace cultivation and shifting cultivation – are significant in the classification of hill tribes. In his essay 'British Attitudes towards Shifting Cultivation', Jacques Pouchepadass pointed out that in colonial administrators' eyes, shifting cultivation was commonly seen as a primitive form of cultivation that was to be restricted in contrast to settled agriculture. The latter was seen as one of the distinguishing features of civilization. He stated that shifting cultivation was to the British officials a destructive practice carried out on lands with no recognized owners; it was difficult to access and conducted in changing patches of forests. It was also regarded as a social evil practiced by people who were 'impatient of control', 'fond of a wild roving life' and

¹²⁷ Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: transformations of an illusion*, p. 53.

¹²⁸ Skaria, 'Shades of Wildness, Tribes, Caste and Gender in Western India', p. 728.

idle in nature. Thus, with the suppression and regression of shifting cultivation and nomadic lifestyles from the second half of the nineteenth century, shifting cultivators appeared as 'the last remnants of an uncivilized past.'¹²⁹ This attitude of the British was prominent in the description of the mode of cultivation and economy of the people in Manipur in which the jhum cultivators and settled cultivators were distinguished from each other.

The valley was considered as a superior land, more suitable for cultivation than the hill slopes were, which the tribes cultivated laboriously. Dr. G. Watt wrote after he formed an impression of Manipur during a boundary expedition:

One of the most striking features of Manipur is the pleasing way in which the mountains, at intervals, widen apart so as to enclose the fertile plains formed by the rivers. The valley of Manipur proper is the largest and most valuable plain of this nature... many other smaller ones burst upon the view of the traveler, each appearing like an oasis, hung from the confusion of wild and rugged mountains... the superiority of land of this kind over that laboriously formed by terracing the slopes of the hills must have been the reward kept in view by tribe rising into importance and power.¹³⁰

The Manipuris practiced wet rice cultivation in this fertile valley and produced abundant crops introduced by Europeans.¹³¹

McCulloch described the use of the plough and buffalo for agricultural purposes. He further stated that without much labour in the valley, "year after year good crops are raised on the same spot."¹³² About nineteen varieties of rice, divided into early and late crops, were grown in the valley in addition to different varieties of fruits and vegetables.¹³³ Thus measured by the yardstick of 'material mastery and

¹²⁹ Jacques Pouchepadass, 'British Attitudes Towards Shifting Cultivation in Colonial South India: A Case Study of South Canara District 1800-1920', In David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha ed. *Nature, Culture, Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia (Studies in Social Ecology and Environmental History of South Asia)*, Delhi, 1995, pp. 123-149.

¹³⁰ Dr. G. Watt, 'The Aboriginal Tribes of Manipur.' *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 16, 1887, p. 348.

¹³¹ Pemberton, *Report on the North East Frontier of India*, pp. 30-31.

¹³² McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes*, p. 28.

¹³³ Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur and The Hill Territory Under Its Rule 1873*, pp. 83-84.

technological advancement',¹³⁴ Manipuris with 'a greater amount of material civilization and culture' were seen to be more civilized than the hill tribes.¹³⁵

In contrast to the means of livelihood in the highly productive valley, the hill men were barely subsisting on *jhum* cultivation and hunting, and were at the same time engaged in barter with the valley communities. The hill people practiced shifting or *jhum* cultivation described as the 'most primitive fashion'.¹³⁶ The felled jungle was reduced to ashes by burning. The thoroughly burnt soil was scratched up with 'little hoes' and mixed with the ashes, and was ready for the reception of seed, which was sown broad cast.¹³⁷ Besides, all these fields had to be watched constantly against wild beasts and required constant weeding.¹³⁸ In their *jhum* fields, the hill people raised crops such as rice, cotton, oil-seeds, pepper, tobacco, vegetables of various kinds, potatoes of small and inferior quality ginger and sweet potatoes of very superior qualities, Indian corn and pan leaves. Food gathering was another mode of subsistence for the hill people. They depended on a number of jungle roots and plants and yam found in the jungles.

The produce of the hill *jhums* was said to be insufficient for their consumption. Shifting cultivation, uncertain produce due to less fertile mountain lands, and dependence on hunting and food gathering marked the hill and the people as inferior and different from the plains. In a report on the 'new Kukis' in the gazetteer of Manipur, it is claimed that they grow rice, mum and chayan, occasionally dhall and a little cotton; also Indian corns, arums, yams and pumpkins. The annual *jhum* products even with root crops seem insufficient for their consumption.¹³⁹ However, there are groups among the hill tribes who practiced terrace cultivation as well. Pemberton wrote in a passing comment on cultivation practices of the hill tribes that "on the north, where the forks near the bases of the mountains are far broader, and the acclivities less precipitous, a terrace system of cultivation very generally

¹³⁴ Crispin Bates, 'Race, Caste and Tribes in Central India: The Early Origins of Indian Anthropometry' in Peter Robb (ed.) *Concept of Race in South Asia*, Delhi, 1998, p. 253.

¹³⁵ Hodson, '*The Native Tribes of Manipur*', p. 300.

¹³⁶ Mc Swiney, *Census of India 1911 Report Assam, Vol.III, Part 1*, p. 4.

¹³⁷ McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes*, pp. 45-46.

¹³⁸ William Shaw, 'Notes on The Thadou Kukis', *Journal of The Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1929, p. 86.

¹³⁹ Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, p. 134.

prevails.”¹⁴⁰ Brown’s description of cultivation in the hills implied that the hill people were not essentially *jhum* cultivators. Brown wrote:

In the level patches of ground, near the banks of rivers and in the small valley, permanent cultivation is carried on, but these patches are of considerable size, and most of the hill-men have to depend entirely upon their *jhum* cultivation on the slopes of the hills. Among several of the tribes there is permanent cultivation on the hill slopes...the mountain land around the village within certain fixed bounds is usually the property of the village. This they cultivated with rice in elevations suited to it ... the produce is very uncertain, both from the vicissitudes of weather, and the differing richness of the soil, which they must of necessity cultivate in their ten years’ rotation.¹⁴¹

The method of cultivation was based on what suited the land. Understanding of the people through the dichotomy of permanent – shifting cultivation also became a marker of difference among the hill people. Nagas, in contrast to the Kukis practiced terrace cultivation – a form of permanent cultivation on the slopes of the hills and lived in permanent villages. “The Loohoopas cultivate the slopes of the hills by terracing, manuring the lands from their buffaloes and cows. The manure thus used is not spread dry on the ground, but is mixed with the streams of water used for irrigation.”¹⁴²

Terrace cultivation was considered better than the ‘abominable and wasteful’ shifting cultivation.¹⁴³ Colonial officials observed that permanently settled and terrace cultivators such as the Nagas produced more than migratory and shifting cultivators. Grains raised from terraced fields were of better quality than that grown in the *jhums*.¹⁴⁴ Nagas therefore were depicted as more thriving than the Kukis. T.C.Hodson observed that inhabitants of the ‘permanently settled villages’ with ‘terraced cultivation’ were ‘bigger, stronger, finer creatures in all respects’ than those of the small villages, with ‘*jhumed* fields’, who still had a ‘tendency to move in search of

¹⁴⁰ Pemberton, ‘*Report on the North East Frontier of India*’, p. 15.

¹⁴¹ Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur and The Hill Territory Under Its Rule 1873*, p. 17.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁴³ McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes*, p.68; Johnstone 1896, reprinted in 1971, p. 79.

¹⁴⁴ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* Vol. XVII, p. 190.

better lands'.¹⁴⁵ Thus, the hill people who possessed terrace fields were counted more fortunate than those who subsisted on *jhuming*. Hodson's description on terrace cultivation and his admiration of the Nagas further reads:

extensive terraced fields magnificently irrigated with water brought from considerable distances in channels so well aligned that every advantage is taken of any natural slope encountered, and awkward corners avoided or turned with admirable ingenuity...not practicable everywhere...fortunate are the tribes who occupy hills whose declivity is not too steep for such fields. By means of long and assiduous labour, a field may be built up and provided with water so that the large terraces represent the expenditure of a large amount of energy and farming ability, as well as much practical and engineering skill.¹⁴⁶

The colonial administrators also saw terrace cultivation as a less primitive method because of the heavy energy and labour it required. They expressed their opinion that if practiced by tribes with migratory habits, this mode of cultivation would induce them to settle permanently.¹⁴⁷ In contrast to terrace cultivation, Hutton noted that shifting cultivation required low amount of labour but was extravagant on land.¹⁴⁸ This however contradicts with the observation of McCulloch who described the hill-men as living by the sweat of his brow working in his *jhum* fields.¹⁴⁹ Colonial abomination for shifting cultivation and preference for terrace cultivation is reflected in a statement made by British administrator Sir James Johnstone. He said that the hill tribes had destroyed fine forests to raise one crop, and forests had degenerated into grass and scrub.¹⁵⁰

In the light of the above description, the Kukis and the Nagas differed in the way they use land. In colonial observation, the Naga were perceived as a 'careful' cultivator while the Kuki were dismissed as 'untidy' and 'wasteful' as a cultivator.¹⁵¹ The Nagas due to their practice of terrace cultivation were thus the 'civilized' group of tribes. The method of cultivation followed by the Kuki and the source of their food

¹⁴⁵ Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁴⁷ Shaw, "Notes on the Thadou Kukis", p. 88.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, footnoted, p. 88.

¹⁴⁹ McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes*, p. 45.

¹⁵⁰ Sir James Johnstone, *Manipur and The Naga Hills.*, Delhi, 1896, reprinted in 1971, p. 79.

¹⁵¹ Carey and Tuck, *The Chin Hills: A History of the people, British dealings with them, their Customs and Manners, and a Gazetteer of their Country*, p. 3.

was criticized as 'destructive'. An attempt was made to restrict and control their use of the forest.

The Waikhong village had also a matter for settlement in connection with their boundaries. The manufacture of salt necessitates the consumption of much firewood, and for this reason the late Rajas had allowed certain tract of brushwood forest to be reserved for the village use only. This forest is contained in the small range of hills to the east of the village and along its western face. A small Kuki colony has lately settled on the eastern face of the reserved tract, and having by their destructive method of cultivation, i.e., by jhooming fresh land yearly, used up the hills on that side, now wish to cultivate on the western face, and to bring in three or four years that face into bareness. The Waikhong people would then be at a loss for firewood for salt manufacture. I have ordered the Kuki village of Ayha to keep aloof from the Western face of the hills...this tract will be reserved for the use of the Waikhong village.¹⁵²

The Kukis, as the celebrated 'noble savage', were an impoverished lot who had difficulty paying their house tax in cash. The Political Officer explained that to be the cause of their reluctance in working outside of their villages. They were made to pay their house tax in guns.¹⁵³ Pacification of the hill people was the foremost agenda of the colonial administrators. Although they recognized the condition of the Kukis, their first intention was to disarm the Kukis in order to pacify them under colonial rule. Assistant Political Officer Lieutenant Goodenough's "very successful tour through the Kuki country to the south of the valley" was accounted as follows:

He collected Rs. 841 and 221 guns from the villages near the Chin Hills, Manipur border. These villages have never paid revenue since the rebellion of 1891. As many of the villages were unable to pay their house tax in rupees, they surrendered guns at the rate of Rs.30 for each firearm. All the guns were flint-locks. The hill men treated Mr. Goodenough and his escort of 30 State police most hospitably, and expressed a hope that he would visit them again next year.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Maxwell Diary, No. 5 of 1896.

¹⁵³ "A distant Kuki village came in to pay its house tax, and brought three flintlock guns in part payment. These far away Kuki villages are always hard up for cash, as the men never work away from their villages." See, Maxwell Diary, No. 22 of 1895..

¹⁵⁴ Maxwell Diary, No. 15 of 1895.

Commended for their careful cultivation, the Nagas were however also represented as lazy by Maxwell, a Political Agent of Manipur, who observed: "The dhan crop in this exceptionally fertile valley is nearly ripe, and looks well. More land could be brought into cultivation, but the Naga population keeps steady, and as much rice is wanted is grown."¹⁵⁵

A common feature of the plain and tribal economies was the significant role of women. The kind of work performed by women in the hills and plains however differed. The Manipuri women were industrious, while the men were lazy and indolent. Women performed all the work of marketing, buying, selling, carrying articles to be sold in public, weaving and spinning at home. Men only performed the heaviest of the work. Tribal women folk performed the bulk of work in addition to bringing up their children without the help of nurses.¹⁵⁶ In his account of the aboriginal tribes of Manipur, Dr. Watt described the Nagas. Their women "do all the heavy work, and the men, when not employed in agricultural labour, sit all day long near the house door, smoking pipes with bamboo water bowls."¹⁵⁷ Tribal women set about doing all kinds of tasks, cooking, fetching water, beating the rice from the husk. They were however portrayed as different from the equally hard working Manipuri women because of their dislike for cleaning the house. Dalton described them as having "no great taste for that necessary labour. They rather glory in a dirty house, in having the front room half covered with rice husk, in which pigs are lying fast asleep or grunting about, and fowls are busy seeking for food."¹⁵⁸ The women of the hills and plains, although similarly hardworking and industrious, were then seen as different in matters of cleanliness, a point that was linked with their primitive habits.

Often sold to outsiders, Naga women were however seen to be exploited and more submissive than the Manipuri women. Naga men sold their women to outsiders like the Kabulis. Kabulis and Pathans were in the state to work as road contractors

¹⁵⁵ Maxwell Diary, No. 45 of 1895.

¹⁵⁶ Shaw, 'Notes on the Thadou Kukis', p. 93.

¹⁵⁷ Dr.G. Watt, 'The Aboriginal Tribes of Manipur.'*The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol.16, 1887, p. 354.

¹⁵⁸ Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 37.

under an Executive Engineer and would leave for their homes after they had done their work and got paid for it.¹⁵⁹

A Kabuli asked for a road permit for his wife, a young Naga girl, whom he had purchased from her master for Rs.30. The marriage had not been consummated, and I explained to the girl how hopeless her position would be as soon as she left British territory. She declined to go, and the Kabuli took back his money, and I released the girl from slavery. From a monetary point of view, the local value of the girl was Rs. 10, and so the owners were only too pleased to accept an offer of three times the amount. What the future of the girl would be was a small matter.¹⁶⁰

The various way of using land by the people was also connected with their settlements and mobility. Tribes that were 'essentially nomadic' were 'primitive': In contrast, the valley of Manipur was inhabited by the Meiteis, or the Manipuri proper who were settled as village communities.¹⁶¹ They represented 'a singular oasis of comparative civilization and organized society, set in the midst of a congeries of barbarous peoples.'¹⁶² The homestead in the plains usually consists of a three separate thatched rooms built round a courtyard, with an outhouse for cattle and agricultural implements.¹⁶³ 'In the hills each household is usually under one roof and the houses are often supported partly on piles as they project from the slopes of the hills.'¹⁶⁴ This settled and organized life-style versus disorder and migratory habits of the valley and hill population also structured the differences between the hill tribes. Those with migratory habits were the more primitive.

Could then a boundary be drawn on the basis of the location of the hill-tribes?

As Brown pointed out:

Although no abrupt boundary line can be drawn between the tracts of country occupied by the two races of Nagas and Kookies, it may be taken for granted that a line drawn about a day's journey south of the Government road, or even at the present day less, running east from Cachar to the Munnipoore valley ... would represent the boundary which separates the two races, – the Nagas lying to the north of this line,

¹⁵⁹ Maxwell Diary, No.23 of 1895.

¹⁶⁰ Maxwell Diary, No.24 of 1895.

¹⁶¹ Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, p. 3.

¹⁶² Hodson, *The Meitheids*, p. xvi.

¹⁶³ Mc Swiney, 'Census of India, 1911 Report Vol.III, Assam, p. 10.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

the Kookies to the South. .. the Heerok range of hills ... inhabited chiefly by three tribes- to the south and east various clans of Murring Nagas...and a few Kookies, branches of the great tribe of Khongjais; towards the north and east the tribe of Nagas called Tankhool or Loohoopa...scattered throughout the whole of this range...villages of the Khongjai tribes. The Lumlangtong or Limatol range of hills ...contains a mixed population of Kowpoe Nagas, Khongjai, and Cheeroo Kookies.¹⁶⁵

Clearly there was no fixed boundary which could divide the location of the Nagas and the Kukis. Often the hills were occupied by a mixed population of both groups. But as they lived in separate villages, the permanent village sites of the Nagas were located easily. The Kowpoe tribes, in particular, lived close to the Manipur valley.

The Kowpoe tribes chiefly inhabit the hill tract lying near the Government road leading from Cachar to Munnipore. Formerly their villages were to be found some three days' journey south of the road, but on account of Loosai raids, especially that of 1869, these have been evacuated, and now the farthest off is only some three or four hours' journey distant from the road in a southerly direction...There are several villages...settled in the Munnipore valley, where they employ themselves in cultivating...carrying firewood...as coolies... numbers of Kowpoees have also settled in the Cachar District, in Luckipore, Chundrapore, Banskandy, and also in the tea gardens; they employ themselves on the gardens...bringing firewood from the jungles.¹⁶⁶

Indeed, the difference between the Nagas and Kukis was implicit in Brown's reflection on the opinion of his fellow officer. As he wrote, 'the attachment shown by Nagas for the sites on which their villages stand ... offers a marked contrast to the migratory habits of most other tribes.'¹⁶⁷ The Kowpoees hold in great esteems 'the former homes, and present graves of their ancestors'. As a result, they were attached to their villages which they abandoned with 'the greatest reluctance.'¹⁶⁸

Just as the dichotomy of permanent-nomadic lifestyle differentiate the hill and plain inhabitants; it also distinguished the Nagas from the Kukis who were

¹⁶⁵ Brown, *Statistical Account of Manipur and The Hill Territory Under Its Rule 1873*, p. 15.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

characterized as more primitive. Prathama Banerjee had noted that in the colonial process of making primitives as an 'intrinsically mobile labour force' assumptions made about 'primitive' societies and 'primitive' bodies were crucial. Colonial rulers assumed that the Santals being 'primitive' were necessarily nomadic. The Santals, seen as a wandering and 'uncontrollably independent' tribe were defined as primitive in contrast to the 'village communities' of Bengal where ownership of land and permanent settlement in land identify and bound the land to its inhabitants. Thus the Santals epitomize the image of an uncontrollably 'wandering 'primitive' for the colonial rulers who sees them as naturally nomadic.¹⁶⁹ The Kukis, in contrast to the permanently settled Nagas, were found scattered with no fixed site of settlement, who would leave their village in search of new sites after living for two or three years as often claimed by colonial officials. Houses of the Kukis were "very much inferior in construction".¹⁷⁰

While the Kukis were accounted in official gazetteers as tribes that 'have been steadily moving northwards', men of the Naga tribes were reported to be 'working in the fields or on the roads'.¹⁷¹ Thus the Kukis, for administrators, were 'migratory' and 'uncontrollable' and 'possessed a strong fissiparous instinct which in no way was checked by the Pax Britannica' as Hodson puts it. The Kukis according to the Political Agent, G.H. Damant, were a 'migratory race who preferred the densest forest.'¹⁷² Kuki villages could not be accurately located by colonial officials. This led Hutton to regard them as an 'administrative nuisance'. As he pointed out, the reason for his dislike was because of 'the Thado Kukis habit of splitting up his villages into scattered hamlets of two or three houses in the jungle so that this year's village is never where you expected to find it'¹⁷³ The kind of attachment that the Nagas had for their village site seemed to be absent among the Kukis. William Shaw attributed the migratory moves of the Thadou Kukis to their 'wander-lust' which made them move villages when they had enough of the place.¹⁷⁴ Thus the Kukis were distinguished

¹⁶⁹ Banerjee, *Politics of Time: 'Primitives' and History-writing in a Colonial Society*, pp. 92-95.

¹⁷⁰ Brown, Annual Report of the Munnipore Political Agency- 1868-1869, p. 131.

¹⁷¹ The Imperial Gazetteer of India Vol. XVII, p. 189.

¹⁷² G. H. Damant, 'Notes on the Locality and Population of the Tribes Dwelling between the Brahmaputra and Ningthi Rivers', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, New Series*, Vol. 12, No. 2, Apr., 1880, pp. 237.

¹⁷³ Shaw, 'Notes on the Thadou Kukis', p. 23.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

from the Nagas as the more unsettled primitive. Colonel J. Shakespeare described the Kukis as 'adopting a vagabond mode of life.'¹⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

Looking at ethnographic literature on the region of Manipur and its people, one can see that the valley people were placed at a higher rank than the hill tribes in the scale of civilization. This kind of social analysis can be called a 'tribalist discourse' as Van Schendel puts it. Such a discourse presumes that all 'tribes' share characteristics that are "fundamentally different from, and even opposite to, those of civilized people."¹⁷⁶ The 'Haow' or hill-people discarded as hill-tribes came to be broadly divided into Nagas and Kukis. Aryan type facial features, terrace cultivation practiced in the slopes of the hills are features which defined amongst the hill tribes too, the Nagas as the comparatively civilized section of the tribes. In contrast, the Kukis were considered the dirtier, hardier, nomadic tribes who practice jhum cultivation in the summit of the hills. Thus marker of tribes that distinguished them from the plains people become marker of primitivity in the hills.

¹⁷⁵ Shakespeare, 'The Kuki -Lushai Clans', p. 371.

¹⁷⁶ Willem Van Schendel, "The Dangers of Belonging: Tribes, Indigenous Peoples and Homelands in South Asia", p. 25.

CHAPTER-2

**THE HEATHENS AS THE 'BARBARIC' AND THE 'UNCIVILIZED':
NAGAS AND KUKIS IN MISSIONARY REPRESENTATIONS**

Much has been written on the history of missions in Manipur and the impact of missionaries on the residents of the region. Frederick S. Downs, in his study of Christianity in North – East India, has pointed out that the hill population of Manipur and other hill tribes of the North-East were on the verge of being influenced by Hinduism due to interaction with the people of the plains. The coming of Christianity in the nineteenth century however averted this process. He asserted that Christianity was a means through which “many of the hill tribes sought to preserve their identity in the face of the perceived new threat of assimilation into the Hindu societies of the plains”. As the majority of the hill people became Christians, the Sanskritised plains-people and the hill-people ‘came to be clearly defined and separate’.¹⁷⁷ Talking about the creation of the identities of the hills and plain people of Manipur, Lal Dena comments that the colonial administration allowed only particular sections of the Manipuri population to be proselytized, and this was one of the factors that consequently created “a great social gap among the people whose past social life was marked by solidarity and cordiality.”¹⁷⁸ Dena also noted that missionary enterprise in Manipur, and the associated literary, educational and medical works that they undertook, resulted in the emergence of new educated groups amongst the hill people who were often in conflict with the traditional elite like the chiefs.¹⁷⁹ Sajal Nag and M. Satish Kumar have looked at missionary enterprise and civilizing mission as a ‘cultural form of colonization’ in the North-East; they have discussed the difficulties that were associated with civilizing the so called ‘savages’. As they argue, religion forms one aspect of culture change that the hills or jungle area underwent.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Frederick S Downs, *Christianity in North-East India: Historical Perspectives*, Delhi, Gauhati, 1983, pp. 8-9.

¹⁷⁸ Lal Dena, *British Policy Towards Manipur, 1762-1947*, revised and enlarged edition, Imphal, 2008, p. 76.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

¹⁸⁰ Sajal Nag and M.Satish Kumar, ‘Noble Savage to Gentleman: Discourses of Civilisation and Missionary Modernity in North East India,’ *Contemporary India*, Vol.1, No. 4, October - December 2002, pp. 113-128.

According to Eaton,¹⁸¹ though Christianity in the Naga Hills called for a total cultural transformation, Christianity found mass acceptance because of different factors. Literacy and Western medicine that came to be associated with Christianity were perceived as new sources of power and were active factors for conversion to Christianity. Moreover, the form of Christianity in the region can be seen more in terms of continuity rather than conflict with indigenous religious system.

Drawing upon some of these readings, this chapter is a study of the missionaries encounter with the hill-tribes of Manipur. It looks at missionary writings and analyses the missionary representation of the hill-tribes as 'heathens' awaiting conversion. Insightful for the study of missionary perception of people is Nicholas Thomas' work in which he brings out the distinctiveness of missionary representation. He pointed out that constructions of 'others' by different sorts of colonizers showed their differing interests and missionaries interests for conversion sets the peculiarity of missionary constructs.¹⁸² Transformation associated with conversion to Christianity points towards the missionary project as being a different kind of colonialism, one that sought to civilize the hill-tribes through Christian and Western cultural norms and values. As Comaroff and Comaroff have pointed out, "in most places, at most times, colonialism did (and does) not exist in the singular, but in a plurality of forms and forces — its particular character being shaped as much by political, social, and ideological contests among the colonizers as by the encounter with the colonized."¹⁸³

Missionary representations of the people, I argue, were distinct from official representations. In missionary accounts, the difference between groups was conceptualized in terms of 'characteristics' that facilitated conversion. Rather than being excessively concerned with 'ethnological discrimination', the missionaries drew differences between converts and non converts on the basis of their propensity towards conversion.¹⁸⁴ As the missionaries resided and undertook mission works

¹⁸¹ Richard M. Eaton, Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.XXI, No. 1, Jan.- March 1984, pp. 1-44.

¹⁸² Nicholas Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.34, No.2. Apr., 1992, pp. 366-389.

¹⁸³ John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, Colorado and Oxford, 1992, p. 211.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

through schools and hospitals in a well organized space called the mission station, the image of the missionaries as a new benevolent authority was enforced. As conversion followed among the hill tribes and reports were written on the basis of observation and interaction with the tribes, the missionaries' understanding of the hill people as sick in body and soul who needed Christianity became a powerful metaphor.

In the case of Manipur the hierarchical classification of the plains and hills inhabitants as well as hill people as Nagas and Kukis slotted on the scale of civilization was not there. The Missionaries did not distinguish between Nagas and Kukis as the administrators had done. However the division of the hill tribes into Nagas and Kukis by administrators was followed by missionaries in identifying the hill tribes. In this chapter, I will largely draw upon the writings of Rev. William Pettigrew, and look at the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Records preserved at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. The records include letters written by missionaries describing to the people at home about their works in the mission field, as well as missionary annual reports and writings in mission magazines.

Section I traces the arrival of the missionaries in the valley and their relocation in the isolated hills amongst the hill-tribes. Section II will look at missionary understanding of the tribes as 'barbaric' and 'uncivilized'. Section III will deal with the link between evangelism and schools, medicine and health care, and Section IV deals with the establishment of mission stations in the hills and missionary interaction with the hill people. It will show how the missionaries, in their efforts at conversion, transformed the tribes. Section V will look at role of the missionaries in the making of the Naga and Kuki identities. Despite their desire to foster peaceful coexistence among the Nagas and the Kukis, this section will show how missionaries unknowingly created borders between different tribes as they sought to reduce local dialects into written form.

Although the American Baptist Mission was not the only mission in Manipur, they were dominant in the region. Manipur Hills was considered to be their exclusive field. While others like Watkin Roberts and his mission in the South Manipur Hills were perceived by the Baptist missionaries in the region as intruders into the Baptist

mission field in Manipur.¹⁸⁵ This study deals with the American Baptist Mission Society.

SECTION I

THE MISSIONARIES ARRIVE

The Christian missionaries arrived in Manipur in 1894. The pioneer missionary, William Pettigrew, initially arrived in the valley, but thereafter moved to the hills in 1896. Mr. Arthington of Leeds and his independent mission named as the Arthington Aborigenese Mission Society, established with a dream that the Gospel would be preached to every tribe in every land, sent out missionaries to work amongst tribes who had never heard of the Gospel.¹⁸⁶ William Pettigrew, an Englishman, was thus sent to Manipur. Granted permission to enter the state of Manipur in January 1894, William Pettigrew began his mission work among the Manipuris in the valley mainly through his educational work. He immediately started a Day school and a Sunday school: fourteen Manipuri boys joined the school and soon forty-eight students were enrolled. Manipuri was used as the language of instruction. The school boys also learned prayers and gospel hymns on Sundays. Officials encouraged the missionary to spread education among the people and allocated financial aid for the purpose.¹⁸⁷

The concern of Pettigrew at this stage was the Manipuris and not the hill tribes. The colonial officials however thought otherwise. The government feared that the missionary's evangelical work would agitate the valley inhabitants, the Meetei Hindus who were seen as the ruling race by the colonial administrators. The missionary had to abandon his work in the valley to work among the 'hill-tribes' instead. This official objective was recorded in the Political Agent's tour diary in

¹⁸⁵ Lal Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947*, Shillong, 1988, p. 49.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁸⁷ Minutes of the Conference of the Assam Missionaries of the American Baptist Missionary Union, 1895, in Rev. Jonah M. Solo and Rev. K. Mahangthei 'Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew, Manipur, 1986, p. 7.

.1893, interestingly before Pettigrew had even reached Manipur. A. Porteous, the Political Agent wrote:

Should the missionaries now in Silchar preparing for future campaign in Manipur ever get so far as Imphal, I should be strongly inclined to recommend Pangwi (Paoyi)¹⁸⁸ to them as a mission station. In the Manipur valley, they would be worst than useless. Among the Tangkhul Nagas, on the other hand, judging by the success of Mr. Clark at Molung, among the Aos, and the hopeful start which was made by Mr. Witter at Wokha among the Lothas, missionaries of the right stamp should have excellent prospects and would at least open a window to civilization out of darkest Manipur, where one is badly wanted. Pangwi ... is certainly isolated.¹⁸⁹

Thus the colonial state used its authority to put the missionaries in 'darkest Manipur' where they could be useful for the state, and closed those areas to missionary activity where it could cause trouble. The school in the valley was taken over by the State without Christian teaching, even as Pettigrew was told either to leave the state or to move on into the hills amongst the hill people at his own risk. Although the government objected to evangelical work in the valley, they agreed to meet the missionary's wishes if he settled in the hills and opened schools there. Pettigrew was sanctioned Rs.300 for this purpose.¹⁹⁰ Meanwhile Pettigrew's three years term of sponsorship from the Arthington Aborigines Mission expired in 1894. He now became a member of the American Baptist Mission Union in 1895. Along with his wife, he started working in the hills among the Tankhuls Nagas.¹⁹¹

The mission field of Manipur in 1894 was a 'remote mountain bound state' with no railway or cart road, but with only a bridle path which the first missionary Pettigrew rode by pony. His bride was carried by coolies.¹⁹² William Pettigrew recalled the initial years he spent as a missionary in Manipur as times when life was in a 'primitive' state.' "The only roads", he recalled, "were dirt roads, with cart-wheel-

¹⁸⁸Paoyi was a Naga village in the hills of Manipur.

¹⁸⁹ Official Tour Diary of Acting Political Agent Mr. A. Porteous, Monday, June 5th, 1893, Quoted in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew Christian Literature Manipur*, preface, vii-ix.

¹⁹⁰ Correspondence between Maxwell and Pettigrew, 1895 in *American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies Records (hereafter ABFMS Records), 1817-1959*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (hereafter NMML), Accession No. 3250.

¹⁹¹ Report from the Tangkhul Naga Field by Rev. William Pettigrew, 1899 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 12.

¹⁹² Mission Report on Kangpokpi, 1901, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

mud ankle deep. There was only one good bridle path from Lower Assam to the state of Manipur.”¹⁹³ The hill of Manipur which was opened for missionary work in 1896 was in ‘still greater isolation’, and had once been called “the halting place of death”.¹⁹⁴ The mission station, Ukhrul, about forty miles from the valley, was reached by an ordinary hill path with no Government roads.¹⁹⁵ Ukhrul was so inaccessible that even travel by pony was impossible and the missionaries knew that they went there at their own risk. The opening of this isolated and remote place to missionary work was considered ‘one of the romances of mission history’.¹⁹⁶

Pettigrew described how the missionary house, different from the native mud house, was constructed with difficulty with building materials from the West.

The difficulties encountered in erecting that house at Ukhrul can be imagined. The mere collection of the necessary materials was a task in itself. Lumber had to be secured and brought there; bricks to be made; tin shingles for the roof brought all the way from America. Carpenters and masons - none too skillful - had to be brought from Imphal and had to be supervised by the Missionary. At last the buildings were completed - a wonderful change from mud hut - and the Pettigrews were deeply thankful to move.¹⁹⁷

In mission magazines or reports meant for readers at home, the missionaries were often lauded for their sufferings in remote places. The hills of Manipur were described as an ‘inaccessible’ place lacking in comforts that missionaries found at home. In ‘far away lonely places’ inhabited by people different from the familiar ‘white-face’, the suffering of the missionary was ‘not always physical.’¹⁹⁸ In a letter written to friends at home, Earl E Brock, a missionary in Manipur, described the country where he worked. According to him, this was a land where men are often old at forty.¹⁹⁹ As missionaries worked in this strange, isolated and risky place, they were

¹⁹³ Mission Reports by Rev. William Pettigrew, 1934, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

¹⁹⁴ Mission Report on Kangpokpi, 1901, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

¹⁹⁵ Report from the Tangkhul Naga Field by Rev. William Pettigrew, 1899 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei *‘Forty Years Mission in Manipur : Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew* , p. 12.

¹⁹⁶ Mission Report on Kangpokpi, 1901, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML. _

¹⁹⁷ Rev. William Pettigrew *Forty Years in Manipur, Assam: An Account of the Work of Rev. and Mrs. William Pettigrew, March 1934*, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei *‘Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 82.

¹⁹⁸ See, Report of mission work for 1913 Assam, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

¹⁹⁹ Station Teller, Karl E. Brock, Kangpokpi Manipur State, June 12, 1941, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

highly-praised by the people at home. Two missionary couples in Manipur expressed the loneliness they felt on their first arrival in the mission field. "We felt like nuns ... cut off from the outside world. Only we would see the natives on the road and that would remind us that we are still in the world ... how helpless we felt in this new land among this strange people."²⁰⁰

By 1907, with the missionaries confined to the hills, the American Baptist Mission Union petitioned for the extension of missionary work among the Manipuris in the valley. Their request was not granted, but permission was given to extend mission work among all the hill tribes surrounding the valley.²⁰¹ This paved the way for the Union to take up work among other tribes, the Kukis in particular. With the attempt to expand mission work, there was the need for more missionaries. Rev U.M Fox, who taught the hill people practical skills such as carpentry and metal work, arrived in Ukhrul in 1911.²⁰² By 1912, the colonial state and the missionaries were contemplating educational works among the Kukis. This was followed by tours and enquiries in the hills particularly among the Kukis.²⁰³ Yet for twenty-three years, from 1894 -1917, Government restrictions kept the missionaries restricted to Ukhrul and the Nagas. By 1916 however, small groups of Kukis started inviting the missionaries to provide teachers and pastors, build churches in their villages, and work amongst them as they did amongst the Nagas in Ukhrul.²⁰⁴

The First World War and the Kuki uprising hampered missionary work in Manipur. During this time the American Baptist Mission Society recommended Dr.G.C Crozier and his wife to work as a medical missionary in Manipur. His voluntary work as a medical officer during the Kuki Rebellion earned the American Baptist Mission their new mission station at Kangpokpi where a dispensary and a

²⁰⁰ First Impressions of Kangpokpi, 1932 by Dr. and Mrs. Werelius, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²⁰¹ Rev. William Pettigrew Ukhrul, The Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 1910 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 66.

²⁰² Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947*, pp. 36-37.

²⁰³ Ukhrul Field Report for 1913 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 39.

²⁰⁴ The Baptist Missionary Review, Vol. XXXVIII, November, 1932 No.11 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur :Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 76.

leper asylum was set up in 1919.²⁰⁵ Dr. Werelius arrived Manipur in 1934, Dr. Alquist arrived in 1940, while Earl E. Brock arrived in 1941. They were the last foreign missionaries to have arrived in the region.

The Ukhrul and Kangpokpi mission stations were situated in the northern hills of Manipur. In Ukhrul, the missionary was mainly in touch with the Tangkhul tribe while in Kangpokpi, contact was with the Thadous.²⁰⁶ Their influence however was not confined to the Tangkhuls and Thadous. Notwithstanding state control, Christianity spread among the hill-tribes of Manipur. Working under state restriction, missionaries had to co-operate with the administrators to proceed with mission work. Services for the administration of the state earned the missionaries the opportunity for mission work in Manipur where they labored for over fifty years.

SECTION II

AMONGST THE NAGAS AND THE KUKIS

Even before the missionaries had actually established contact with the people of the hills, they were informed by administrators that the hill 'tribes' were 'wild', "fond of taking human life" and had a "crude idea of right and wrong."²⁰⁷ However, amongst them, the Tankhuls as potential converts were represented in a positive way. A political officer in Manipur introduced the Tankhuls as he saw them to Pettigrew. He wrote:

The Tankhuls appears...most promising to work amongst. He is tractable...not fond of taking human life as many of the other wild tribes...many Tangkhuls...in camp as porters...have invariably been well behaved and quiet...Up to the present the Tangkhul has never had anyone in power or authority whom he might call his friend. The Manipur durbar used to compel him to the most of the hard labour in executing public works in the capital town. When he had performed the drudgery he was only too happy to return to his home and be left alone...If a missionary goes to live

²⁰⁵ Rev. William Pettigrew *Forty Years in Manipur, Assam...*, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur : Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 91.

²⁰⁶ Nelson Vaiphei 'Dr and Mrs G.G. Crozier' Kangpokpi, 1995 in Kim Vaiphei, *The Coming of Christianity in Manipur: with special reference to the Kukis*, New Delhi, 1995. pp, 40-41.

²⁰⁷ Correspondence between Political Agent Maxwell and Rev. William Pettigrew, Manipur 21, Jan., 1895, ABFMS Records, 1817-1959, Acc. No. 3250, NMML.

amongst them...these people will flock around him ...treat him with respect...there is every probability...they will listen to his teaching replace with it the present crude ideas of right and wrong.²⁰⁸

Later Pettigrew, assured by the officer, reported that he had spent 'a most interesting fortnight' among the Tangkhuls and 'was treated in every way with respect and kindness'. As close partners in a common task of controlling the hill-tribes, missionaries and colonial officials often shared perspectives. The hill-tribes were already conceived as 'savages', the 'Other' of 'civilization', who could thereafter be civilized through Christian teaching.²⁰⁹ The good news in the Political Agent's words was that Pettigrew's first potential converts were not as bad as others. But missionaries are ardent Christians with certain beliefs important in their outlook. For instance, the pioneer missionary of Manipur, Pettigrew rested his faith in the universal and total ruin of the human race and the human propensity towards moral degradation. Belief in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was the only remission for sin.²¹⁰ This 'remission for sin' was available for every human being. As Pettigrew wrote, "I firmly maintain that the Gospel should be proclaimed without reserve or qualification to every creature on earth; that the responsibility of all who hear is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and to receive justification and forgiveness of sins."²¹¹ This belief implied that no matter what the condition of the people was, they could be improved and salvation was possible.

There was also a difference between the colonial administrator and the missionary. Ousted from the valley in 1895, the missionary was forced to work amongst these 'wild tribes' in the hills. Cooper and Stoler have pointed out that "different modes of interacting with indigenous peoples – including sexual relations – both marked such distinctions and became tension – laden arenas for the contestation of status, autonomy, and control within the white population."²¹² Distinctions between administrators and missionaries were seen in their intentions, and in the nature of their

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Sajal Nag and M. Satish Kumar, 'Noble Savage to Gentleman: Discourses of Civilisation and Missionary Modernity in North East India,' *Contemporary India*, Vol.I, No. 4, October- December 2002, pp. 116-117.

²¹⁰ Letter from Pettigrew to Rev. Duncan, 1895, ABFMS Records, 1817-1959, Acc.No.3250, NMML.
²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Frederick Cooper, Ann Stoler, 'Introduction tensions of empire: colonial control and visions of rule,' *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 16, No.4, 1989, p. 615.

interaction with the 'hill-tribes'. The state in Manipur was known for its obsession with recruiting hill-tribes for labour: they would 'spirit away young men to the outside world. The first task for the missionary was to show that he was not a 'paid government agent' to recruit young men as coolies to faraway places.²¹³ Pettigrew suggested that the missionary's coming amongst the tribes was 'for their good'. He added that it took time for people to understand how the state had dealt with the hill-tribes, and to recognize the good intentions that missionary had towards them.²¹⁴ The hill peoples' first reaction to missionaries was therefore marked by distrust. Initially seen as one of the '*sahib lok*', the missionary arrival in the mission field caused a great deal of suspicion. Missionaries drew their difference from the colonial administrators by defining themselves as 'disinterested individuals' who lived amongst the tribes.²¹⁵ As another missionary, Karl E. Brock, wrote "The people were in serious need of encouragement and a steadying influence ... the very fact that a man is among them to share their problems and help wherever he can gives a touch and an influence that might be lacking under happier conditions."²¹⁶ While the relationship of the colonized and other colonial agents like administrators was coercive and sometimes marked by brutality, mission encounter was different from colonial rule because it was marked by sympathy.²¹⁷

Integral to the missionary encounter was the complex and paradoxical relationship with the 'other'. The mission object of conversion required two contradictory things. First, it expected dissolution of difference for integration into a distinct group of believers. Equally important was the retention of boundaries between 'heathens' and Christians in missionary accounts to show the need for conversion.²¹⁸ This paradox was explicit in missionary accounts about the hill people in Manipur. The inhabitants of the hills surrounding the valley were known broadly as 'Nagas'

²¹³ 'The Long Journey into Manipur' Kangpokpi Assam, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²¹⁴ Report from the Tangkhul Naga Field by Rev. William Pettigrew, 1899, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew, 1986, p. 13.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Station Letter, Karl E. Brock, January 1942, ABFMS Records, 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²¹⁷ Cooper, Stoler, 'Introduction tensions of empire: colonial control and visions of rule', p. 618.

²¹⁸ Monica Juneja, 'Mission, Encounters and Transnational History- Reflections on the use of Concepts Across Cultures' in Andrew Gross, Y. Vincent Kumaradoss; Heike Liebau, (Eds.) *Halle and the beginning of Protestant Christianity in India: communication between India and Europe*, Vol.3 Halle: Verlag der Franckesche Stiftungen Zu Halle, 2006, p. 1031.

and 'Kukis' by colonial officials. For the missionaries they were "multiplicity of tribes sprinkled about the mountainous region of the state."²¹⁹ Commonly seen as potential converts who need conversion, the hill people were seen to share characteristics.

To emphasize the prospects of successfully preaching the Gospel to the hill-tribes rather than to the Manipuris, Pettigrew reported that the former are "practically without any religion" while the latter were "the most bigoted of Hindus."²²⁰ Their beliefs and forms of worship therefore were not considered a religion but described as 'animism'. Its followers were 'very superstitious'. The Tangkhul and other hill tribes were observed to be different from Hindus or Muslims.

The Tangkhul Nagas like all other tribes in these hills, believe in a supreme being, known by them as *Varivara*, who made the world but is not much interested in its inhabitants. Far more important to the average man are the numerous *kumyas*, "demons," who are supposed to inhabit every hill and stream. Every illness and every failure of crops is put down to the influence of some demon; propitiating them consumes the whole of a hill man's existence.²²¹

As non-Christians, the hill people, and the Hindus or Muslims of the plains, however also shared a conservatism in their beliefs due to frequent contact. Difference between the two however lay in their respective beliefs. As Pettigrew wrote in 1896:

the hardness of the heart is very apparent here and no baptisms have taken place...the interest in the things pertaining to righteousness is gradually showing itself...they have for generations been in constant touch with the Manipuris of the valley, who are bigoted Hindus, and it is a fact that the Nagas also have conservative ideas of their own beliefs in evil spirits. It is refreshing to know and a good sign also, that they confess to have forgotten about the Creator "*varivara*" while occupying a great deal of their time in propitiating the evil spirits "*kumyao*". It is left for the missionary to

²¹⁹ See, Mission Work in Assam, 1913, ABFMS Records, 1817-1959. Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²²⁰ Letter from Pettigrew to Rev. Duncan, 1895, ABFMS Records, 1817-1959, Acc. No. 3250, NMML.

²²¹ Manipur: A Pioneer Work by Rev. William Pettigrew, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, November, 1905, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei 'Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew, p. 39.

reveal to them, with God's help, the Creator whom they have forgotten, so that He may have the glory and many may come to him.²²²

The missionary recognized elements in tribal beliefs which they hoped would make conversion possible among them.²²³ Introducing Christianity in terms of 'continuity rather than conflict' with indigenous belief system was a necessary factor for conversion.²²⁴ Thus missionaries held the hope that in contrast to Hindus or Muslims, the process of conversion to Christianity for tribals would involve less conflict because of their existing belief in a creator god. Tribal belief in a Creator God was the 'intercultural points of contact' through which the missionary will convey the true 'Creator' whom they had ignored. In this sense, Christianization meant the changing of the hill people's 'religiosity into a form of Christianity.'²²⁵

Based on their ideas of sins and remedy for guilt, the hill people were characterized as 'benighted' with 'crude ideas of sin' and who 'think little of it.' In their estimation, 'the killing of a pig or a dog seems to be sufficient to cover many sins. Gross ignorance and superstition bind them hand and foot, and it needs the patient sowing of God's truth to make them understand the way of life.'²²⁶ The hill tribes were therefore 'heathens' with 'animistic fear and superstition'.²²⁷ As 'heathens', their burial customs and tribal feasts that followed were criticized to be an

²²² Report of Mr. Pettigrew, Ukhrul-1896, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine* Vol. lxxx, 1900, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur :Mission Reports of Rev.William Pettigrew*, p. 24.

²²³ Nicholas Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.34, No.2, Apr., 1992, p. 375.

²²⁴ Eaton, *Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971*, p. 43.

²²⁵ Juneja, 'Mission, Encounters and Transnational History- Reflections on the use of Concepts Across Cultures' in Gross, Kumaradoss; Heike Liebau,Eds. *Halle and the beginning of Protestant Christianity in India: communication between India and Europe*, Vol. 3, p. 1034.

²²⁶ Itinerating in the Tangkhul Naga Country, Assam, India by Rev. W. Pettigrew, *All Nations*, July 1907, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev.William Pettigrew*, p. 44.

²²⁷ Manipur State...1891-1932 by Rev.W.Pettigrew, *The Baptist Missionary Review* Vol.xxxviii, Nov.1932, No.11 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev.William Pettigrew*, p. 74.

expensive affair leading to disastrous effects on the living standard especially for widows with children.²²⁸

The hill people, as 'heathens', were perceived as barbaric people with no moral principles and lacking in the values of civilization. The practice of headhunting, which was an emblem for savagery or heathenism in missionary representation,²²⁹ and cruelty to women, characterized the hill people as 'savage' and 'barbaric':

The Tangkhul Nagas ...are a distinct people with language, customs and habits peculiar to themselves. The people of this district are by nature in a state of active feud, and when free from foreign interference, they devote all their energies to their quarrels. When their quarrels is of the bitterest nature they kill one another, wherever and however they can, the killing of a woman and a child than being esteemed more than the killing of a man...they like some of the Nagas in Assam are headhunters. Whole rows of human skulls are hung up in the chief's house, to show their bravery and success; and many of the warriors wear neck lets with human hair attached.²³⁰

Living amongst the tribes was therefore considered dangerous for women. Pettigrew stated why he was no longer supported by the Arthington Aborigine Society in his letter to the Baptist Missionary Union in 1895. He wrote:

Mr. Arthington on receiving my report last February refused to support me as a married missionary amongst the tribe, he thinking it unwise and not prudent to take a wife to such a place. Needless to say there are far worse places than this country where missionaries are now living even in upper Assam.²³¹

But in a more positive note, the missionary maintained that for women missionaries the mission field was not as bad as other places. Although the hills were comparatively safe for women missionaries, the status of tribal women was seen in negative light. If not victims of tribal atrocities tribal women or girls were depressed

²²⁸ Burial Customs Among the Tangkhul Nagas by Rev. W. Pettigrew, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, March 1909, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, pp. 52-56.

²²⁹ See for instance, Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda', p. 373.

²³⁰ Manipur: A Pioneer Work by Rev. William Pettigrew, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Nov., 1905 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, pp. 39-40.

²³¹ Letter from Pettigrew to American Baptist Missionary Union, 1895, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3250, NMML.

sections of the tribes and even converted parents were reluctant to send them to schools. They were meant for 'a life of drudgery', 'assets who brought their father a good marriage price' and were kept at home for field and house work.²³² This degraded condition of tribal women marked the people as 'barbaric' in missionary perception.²³³ In habits, the people were found to be "anything but truthful or reliable. The Manipuri is reckoned a liar, but these Tangkhul Nagas can beat him. The missionaries have not come across one yet whose words or actions can be fully relied upon."²³⁴

Their lifestyle was also uncivilized. They were dirty people who lacked cleanliness in their habits. The missionary held that these degraded and superstitious people had little or no idea of sanitary principles.²³⁵ The Kuki were observed to be 'not famous for cleanliness.' A Primary School teacher in the hills wrote that school students needed to be taught practical lessons about cleanliness as the 'theory of cleanliness' could not get into the minds of Kuki children.²³⁶

The centrality of rice beer in their customs and their addiction to it marked them as uncivilized. Excessive drinking was considered as a 'pagan ritual' and a 'sign' of absorption in physical pleasure and lack of control.²³⁷ The hill people were addicted to 'zu' drinking to the extent that it made them irresponsible. A medical missionary gave an account of his tours in the mountains. He wrote:

When at last we started off the mountain we discovered that one of our coolies was so drunk that he could not stand up on his feet to say nothing about carrying our baskets.

²³² Report on Kangpokpi, Assam, Kangpokpi General Material 1924-1949, and ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc.No. 3257, NMML.

²³³ Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions; Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda', p. 370.

²³⁴ Ukhrol by Rev. William Pettigrew, The Assam Baptist Missionary Conference, 1910, in Rev. Jonah and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur :Mission Reports of Rev.William Pettigrew1986*, p. 57.

²³⁵ Manipur: A Pioneer Work by Rev. William Pettigrew, The Baptist Missionary Magazine, November 1905, in Rev.Solo and Rev.Mahangthei,*Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev.William Pettigrew*, p. 40.

²³⁶ Women's Report for 1929 by Miss E.M Stevenson in Elungkiebe Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, Guwahati, 2005, p. 104.

²³⁷ T.O. Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission At The Grassroots*, Bloomington, USA, 1982, p. 130.

We had to take his load and distribute it among the rest. They did not believe in prohibition in this country.²³⁸

The missionaries' contempt for drinks and attempt to teach abstinence was clearly noted by Pettigrew:

Again it seems to be the custom to bring a bottle or two of their rice beer to any European official on tour, who usually accepts it. The missionary wishing to introduce to abstinence principles refused in the first instance, and kept refusing, until no Naga of any village thinks of tendering the stuff to him. This is another thing that tended to estrange them, for all know that they expected a bakshish after the 'zu' had been taken. These may appear trivial things, but trivial or otherwise there remained for a long time utter indifference to the missionary's desire towards them. Now the tide is turning and confidence is being shown as already stated, and with regard to the drink question some influence for good is being seen in some lives. The Naga girl who looks after the children has noticed the abstemiousness of the household and has informed Mrs. Pettigrew that she does not drink now, for she knows it is not liked. The school boys...have learned much with regard to this habit, and though it cannot be said for certain, still there is the belief that they drink very little.²³⁹

A relationship of dependence and control bound missionaries and 'childlike' converts. Seen as infantile, they needed teaching, discipline and control.²⁴⁰ The issue of drinking was an area where negotiation was unacceptable and all natives, within the mission compound, had to abide by the norm of abstinence from drinking. It was decided to baptize only those who were willing to give up the drinking of the village 'zu' (rice beer,) mild or strong.²⁴¹ Moreover the missionary as the 'master of the mission' disciplined the non-converts as well as converts who had acted against the orders laid down by the missionaries.²⁴² In 1941 Rev. Karl .E. Brock wrote:

²³⁸ Copy of Letter from Dr. and Mrs. Werelius, Kangpokpi, Manipur, Assam, India, April 13, 1932, ABFMS Records, Acc.No. 3257, NMML.

²³⁹ Report from the Tangkhul Naga Field by Rev. William Pettigrew, 1899 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 14.

²⁴⁰ Saurabh Dube, 'Paternalism and Freedom: The Evangelical Encounter in Colonial Chhattisgarh, Central India,' *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.29, No. 1, February, 1995, p. 199.

²⁴¹ Rev. William Pettigrew Reports on Ukhrul-1896, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. lxxvii, 1902 in Rev. Jonah M. Solo and Rev. K. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 28.

²⁴² Dube, 'Paternalism and Freedom: The Evangelical Encounter in Colonial Chhattisgarh, Central India', p. 181.

I had to discipline seven cases of drunkenness among non- Christians in the leper colony. Just as I started out to look into that, I was told that liquor was being sold in the shop belonging to the pastor of the Kangpokpi Church. After some investigation I found that it was true and the pastor acknowledged that, he had allowed his sister, a non- Christian to sell it for a year from the cook house connected with the shop. Imagine what a blow it was to our work, to have non- Christians going around telling about the liquor that was being sold at the shop of a teacher in the mission school and the pastor of the church. There was nothing to do but discharge him.²⁴³

They were moreover defined as ‘benighted’ people who lacked the values of civilization. Absence of written language and the people’s dislike for education was another marker of an uncivilized condition. “Unlike the Manipuris the Tangkhul Nagas had no written language, not even the rudiments of an alphabet.”²⁴⁴ Pettigrew wrote “Any old piece of paper was grabbed and looked upon as a curiosity.”²⁴⁵ When the first school was opened in Ukhrul in 1896 the missionary had to spend at least six weeks to persuade the villagers to send their boys to school.²⁴⁶

In contradiction to being characterized as ‘savages’ due to their practice of headhunting, the hill people were also depicted as ‘cowardly’. The missionaries observed them as “naturally a cowardly set of people, susceptible to ridicule” and easily frightened by any suggestion of punishment. The chiefs and elders of their villages discouraged any attempt to break away from their “heathenish[sic] customs” as much as possible.²⁴⁷ Cowardice and fear of punishment marked the hill tribes as childlike which unsettled their image of savagery. This way of representation was to separate the future converts from extreme barbarism and show the possibility of converting and civilizing the ‘savages’. The ambivalent portrayal of the tribes is central to missionary accounts as a necessary basis for conversion.²⁴⁸ One missionary

²⁴³ Kangpokpi, July 6, 1941, Rev. Karl. E. Brock, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²⁴⁴ Manipur: A Pioneer Work by Rev. William Pettigrew, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Nov., 1905 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 39.

²⁴⁵ Rev. William Pettigrew *Forty Years in Manipur, Assam...*, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 83.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Itinerating in the Tangkhul Naga Country, Assam, India by Rev. William Pettigrew, *All Nations*, July, 1907, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 46.

²⁴⁸ Thomas, ‘Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda’, pp. 374-375.

gave an interesting account about how a picture of Christ from a children's picture roll caught the attention of a tribal old man.

Yesterday I took a picture of Christ healing the sick to the leper colony and put it up, because Mrs. Alhquist wanted them to have a picture of the Great Physician... I spoke on Christ as the one who understands the one who loves and the one who will take those who love Him to be with Him. After church I opened the door of the church and saw an old man standing with clasped hands and a rapt look on his scarred face as he gazed at the simple print taken from a primary picture roll. I passed on because I did not want to interrupt him.²⁴⁹

It is highly notable that all tribal people, young and old alike, were imagined collectively as 'infantile'. They were seen as living without serious thoughts before they heard about Christianity. The missionary described the people who heard him teach about Bible stories as follows:

We took it in turn to explain the old and the New Testament stories, bringing in the Gospel of God's Grace as a fitting conclusion to the day's work. Men, women and children would listen with rapt attention, and murmur approval. Many were noticed to be thinking more seriously than possibly they had ever done in their lives.²⁵⁰

The new generation of Christians was referred to as either 'children' of 'wild and warlike men' or 'kindred tribes' who still remembered headhunting activities of their tribes:

It was the children of these people and of kindred tribes who act in memory of his [the missionary] coming... children of wild, warlike men, many of whom could remember the days of the inter-headhunting raids themselves.²⁵¹

In missionary accounts difference between civilized and savage was based on the hierarchy of a family order. The seemingly impossible mission project of incorporating the 'civilized' and 'barbarians' was attained within this family group.

²⁴⁹ Karl E. Brock Letters October, 5, 1941 from Station Letter, by Mrs. Karl E. Brock, Dec., 5, 1941, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²⁵⁰ Itinerating in the Tangkhul Naga Country, Assam, India by Rev. William Pettigrew, All Nations, July 1907 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei *'Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 44.

²⁵¹ Reports of Rev. and Mrs. E. E. Brock, March 30, 1948, ABFMS Records, 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

The hill people were perceived as 'childlike' that could grow up into Christian men or women through conversion.

SECTION III

HEALING THE MIND AND BODY

One important task of the missionaries was 'establishing the Mission by gaining influence over those coming directly in contact with him.'²⁵² This was done through the establishment of schools and through providing medical facilities. Reading the Bible was essential to Christian life.²⁵³ Teaching the hill people how to read and write was an important requirement for the converts to become good Christians.²⁵⁴ Schools served as an important medium to bring literacy among the tribes and inculcate Christianity through the written word. Schools, for the colonial state, were an important medium to attain the desired goal of improving the valley people; for the missionaries, it was a way of imparting Christianity.²⁵⁵ Thus missionaries and the colonial state cooperated in carrying out educational work. Although missionary and Christian teaching was not wanted in the valley, school work continued with the missionary being appointed as the honorary inspector. With time, new schools were opened up. Teachers were appointed and the number of schools in the valley increased from one Middle English school in 1894 to six lower primary schools that were scattered in the valley, and three more in the capital Imphal.²⁵⁶

²⁵² Itinerating in the Tangkhul Naga Country, by Rev. William Pettigrew, All Nations, July, 1907 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 41.

²⁵³ Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*, p. 112.

²⁵⁴ Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947*, p. 90.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

²⁵⁶ Report from the Tangkhul Naga Field by Rev. W. Pettigrew, 1899, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew 1986*, p. 15.

In Ukhrul, Pettigrew started a school for boys while he learnt the Ukhrul dialect, and reduced it to writing. Pettigrew described how hill schools functioned. He reported:

... no objection is made to Christian truth being taught...the books they study aim to inculcate Christian truth. The school is opened daily with singing and prayer. On the Lord's Day they come together to sing and listen to the Gospel story. As soon as the catechism is printed, they will be able more efficiently to retain in their minds the truth they have learned orally.²⁵⁷

The mission schools in the hills served as the 'centre of all education.' The village evangelists, the village teachers, village writers, and others who rendered service to the state were trained in schools. Significantly, the languages taught and studied in the mission schools were Tangkhul, Manipuri and English.²⁵⁸ Dr. Werelius, a missionary in Manipur, reported that mission schools in Manipur were the best 'Evangelistic agency' and were 'primarily evangelistic'. Students were taught how to read and write and what it means to be a Christian and how to be one.²⁵⁹ Schools and education were considered important for the 'spiritual help' it offered the hill people.²⁶⁰ Mission education served the secular and religious goals that state officials and missionaries had held.²⁶¹

Education at the elementary level was thought sufficient for the hill people.²⁶² Moreover education for girls was started with the setting up of night schools as the people put up strong opposition to educate their daughters. School teachers urged parents in the villages to let their daughters attend the night schools after the day's work.²⁶³

²⁵⁷ Report from the Tangkhul Naga Field by Rev. W. Pettigrew, 1899, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, pp. 14-16.

²⁵⁸ Ukhrul Field Report for 1913 by Rev. U.M. Fox in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 43.

²⁵⁹ Evangelistic Field Report, Kangpokpi Assam by Dr. Werelius, 1937, ABFMS Reports, NMML.

²⁶⁰ Reports from J.E. Anderson, 1940, ABFMS Reports, NMML.

²⁶¹ Dena, *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in Northeast India With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947*, p. 91

²⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

²⁶³ 'The Long Journey into Manipur', Kangpokpi, Assam, ABFMS Records, 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

The need for medical work among the hill people struck the missionary upon his arrival in Manipur. Dr. Crozier, the medical missionary, who started extensive medical work in Manipur, spelt out the agenda of the medical missionary – “We came for the medical work that is very greatly needed and the educational and evangelistic, and ... to minister to the great needs of the people in all lines.”²⁶⁴ In Missionary writings, sickness and disease were largely seen as manifestations of destitution and filth. In most villages there was lack of village sanitation and many sick people. In a certain village all the children were found to have large spleena[sic].²⁶⁵ Dr. Werelius, missionary to Manipur, testified to the need for medical missions:

The utter destitution of the people in the hills of Manipur is noted in my educational report, but it is in the role of the medical officer that I recognize it in its worst form. I have visited villages where the people were so undernourished that the whole village was suffering from the dietary deficiency diseases. Yet they must go about their work or starve...now I have seen goiters as large as the patient’s head. Sometimes the total population of villages has been treated by me. The treatment and my help seem so little, but to them it seemed sufficient. During the past year we treated 2,183 patients, of whom 2,055 were out – patients, suffering with all sorts of diseases.²⁶⁶

Through medical work, the missionaries claimed to mitigate the physical suffering of the people.²⁶⁷ Beidelman has argued that missionary medical practices revealed the relation between science and religion. Health for Christians involved physical and spiritual wholeness. Physical sickness was a manifestation of a person’s moral and spiritual degradation.²⁶⁸ Rev U.M. Fox spelled out the role of the medical missionary in Manipur as they engaged in ministering to the ‘sick in body’ and ‘sin-diseased’ people:

²⁶⁴ The Kangpokpi Mission Compound, 1920 in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 62.

²⁶⁵ Annual Report, Kangpokpi Assam by J.A. Alhquist M.D, 1940, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²⁶⁶ One-Hundred-Twenty-First Annual Report by Dr. Walter R. Werelius, M.D, ABFMS, 1935 in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 133.

²⁶⁷ Manipur: A Pioneer Work by Rev. William Pettigrew, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, November, 1905, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 40.

²⁶⁸ Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission At The Grassroots*, pp. 109-111.

Medical work among this people is a necessity and should have a very large place. At present a portion of the morning is given to the treatment of patients from near and far, who come to the dispensary for aid. One could hardly give his whole time travelling among the villages, healing the sick in body and at the same time administering to the spiritual needs of sin-diseased people.²⁶⁹

In order to alleviate their spiritual suffering, the evangelists attempted to reform the natives beginning at the 'humble terrain of every day practice' as they tried to bring 'decency', 'cleanliness' and 'health' to the people. The image of the 'infested' and dirty native in contrast to the 'clean' and 'well-dressed' Christian emerged in missionary writings. Healing facilitates cultural domination through cloths, money, medicine and moral instruction for salvation.²⁷⁰

Medical work required confrontation of the superstitious minds of the hill people:

With regard to the medical work accomplished, over 200 patients were treated. In these outlying villages it is still necessary to prove that medicine is more powerful to stop disease than the offerings of dogs and pigs to evil spirits, or bamboo manipulations. We feel confident however that the people will gradually forget that medicine will cause them to swell up and die and will lose their dread of being cut to pieces by the foreign doctor.²⁷¹

By showing that medicine was superior to their superstitious rites for healing, the missionaries hope to bring spiritual and moral wholeness to the natives. Moreover medical work opened opportunities for the missionaries to preach the Gospel. To patients in the waiting room, the missionaries seize the opportunity to speak about "the Great Physician who can heal the soul."²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Ukhrul Field Report for 1913 by Rev. U.M. Fox, Report to the 12th Biennial Session, American Baptist Mission Conference of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies, 1913, 59-61, in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 44.

²⁷⁰ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, p. 224.

²⁷¹ A Tour Among the Tangkhul Nagas in the Hill of Manipur State by Rev. William Pettigrew, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. lxxxvii, in Rev.Solo and Rev.Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur : Mission Reports of Rev.William Pettigrew*, p. 51.

²⁷² Itinerating in the Tangkhul Naga Country, Assam, India by Rev. W. Pettigrew, *All Nations*, July 1907 reprinted by Rev.Solo and Rev.Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev.William Pettigrew*, p. 47.

The practice of medicine and healing in mission work served as an effective means of evangelism. Thus, a missionary, it was argued, need to combine in himself the role of a 'physician', 'an ardent evangelist', and 'an efficient administrator'.²⁷³

The missionaries reported about healed native converts who had given himself for mission work faithfully. "A leper who was healed is doing fine work for the master in Anal villages. When he returned to his village from the leper asylum, there was no Christian in his village. Now in two years there are ten Christians there. He is trying to open a school and we praise the Lord for him. He said he was so happy."²⁷⁴ In some cases being healed entailed conversion to Christianity. Dr. Werelius accounted about a family whose father was cured. "It was only with great pressure that I was able to get three lads whose father was a leper in our leper colony whose mother was with him. But joy soon filled the lives of the boys and all five were baptized one happy day with many others here on the mission compound, the father having been apparently cured."²⁷⁵ As an effective agent of evangelism and seen as one of the benefits Christianity can offer, the missionaries made sure that medical work was associated with Christian teaching. "Our leper work has resulted in the state seriously considering plans for a leper asylum for Manipuri lepers because I refused to care for them unless permitted to teach them the Gospel that has made all this possible."²⁷⁶

Through medical work the missionary sets an example of Christian selfless labour, and by alleviating physical pain, won the hearts of the people who were inclined to become Christians.²⁷⁷ The image of the medical missionary as a living example of Christ the Physician won the hearts of the people encountered in the mission fields. Medicine became the 'evident potency of the European' much demanded by the native and as they sought healing from the missionaries, the natives, as suggested by Comaroff and Comaroff, 'attempted to imbibe something of his

²⁷³ Advance Baptist Work in Manipur, Assam India Oct 12, 1939, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²⁷⁴ The Doctor Tours, Letter from Dr. Werelius, Kangpokpi, Assam, 1937, ABFMS Records, NMML., Acc. No. 3257.

²⁷⁵ Educational Report for 1921 by Dr. G. G. Crozier, in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 80.

²⁷⁶ Medical Report for 1920-1921, by Dr. G. G. Crozier, in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 71.

²⁷⁷ Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission At The Grassroots*, pp. 109-111.

tangible might.²⁷⁸ It was however also difficult to successfully convince a patient about the efficacy of medical treatment. As Dr. Werelius wrote:

Another one brought his father...he had not been able to see for three years. Upon examination I found out that the poor man had cataract in both eyes. I tell him to come to the hospital, I would operate on his eyes and he would be able to see. But the hill people are afraid of operations. Couldn't I just give him some medicine which would take care of it? He would pay, he said, even give us a buffalo but he did not want an operation.²⁷⁹

Thus, the medical missionary not only won the heart of the natives, but medicine and its healing power was seen as the might of the missionaries.

Health like salvation and wealth was a moral achievement to be secured by rational consumption and illness become a marker of personal indigence or self-abuse.²⁸⁰ Moreover, health became a marker of Christians in contrast to the sickly non-Christians. To be a non-Christian and to drink beer sometimes resulted to death while others were healed. Dr. Werelius wrote about his tours in 1937,

During the tour there are many sick healed. In one Christian village there are many who need medicine. Among them there were a father and a son. After the doctor had left that village he heard that the son had died. Some people from the village said that the father and son-after taking the medicine went and drank beer and were drunk. They were the only Non-Christians in the village.²⁸¹

Thus medical work necessitates setting the mind of the people right that was often filled with false beliefs. Medicine and healing would not only illustrate the philanthropic role of missionaries and Christianity but would rid the minds of the potential converts from non-Christian beliefs and fears and clear the land of diseases. Sickness implied lack of civilization and Christianity which could be denigrated by pure Christian living and modern medicine. Schools and medical works were means of healing the mind and the body of the non-Christians. The image of a diseased

²⁷⁸ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, p. 227.

²⁷⁹ Copy of Letter from Dr. and Mrs. Werelius, Kangpokpi, Manipur, Assam, India April 13, 1932, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²⁸⁰ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, p. 227.

²⁸¹ The Doctor Tours, Letter from Dr. Werelius, Kangpokpi, Assam, 1937, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

people in missionary writings blurred distinctions and internal hierarchy often drawn between the different hill tribes in Manipur by colonial administrators.

SECTION IV

TRANSFORMING THE TRIBES

Conversion to Christianity entailed transformation and development of 'Christian character' that set converts apart from non converts. The Mission policy of changing tribals according to "Victorian morals, dress, language, ethics, and culture" would modernize tribes into 'Englishmen'²⁸² and transform 'barbaric' and 'uncivilized' people through Christianity.²⁸³ All activities of the missionaries revolved around the desire to impart the Gospel and Christian living among the people they encountered. Nicholas Thomas has looked at the mission as more than a religious agent. According to him, the mission is an institution that reorganizes work and social life to create order amongst the tribes. Others like Saurabh Dube have analyzed evangelical encounter in colonial Chattisgarh and have shown how mission had developed into a 'paternalist institution' in which signs of civilization like 'building', 'western medicine' and the 'printed word' augmented missionary authority. The mission stations in Manipur at Ukhrul and Kangpokpi were mission centers where missionaries lived in the midst of the 'uncivilized' hill people and transform them through their influence and guidance. It involved opening up 'wild land' and connecting this with the outside world through, what the missionary referred to as, 'our roads':

The state has granted for the Mission 212 acres of wild land covered with small oak and grass jungle on the mountain side contiguous to the Kangpokpi Inspection Bungalow, and 18 acres quarter of a mile away for a leper colony ... the main stream has plenty of water power in great force for all our needs for shop and electric light plant. Motor cars have already proved that our road gives them suitable grade and

²⁸² Nag and Kumar, 'Noble Savage to Gentleman: Discourses of Civilisation and Missionary Modernity in North East India', p. 121.

²⁸³ Comaroff, 'Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa', p. 673.

space. A short section of the road round the end of the playground remains to be completed when time and funds are available.²⁸⁴

Thus the missionaries attempted to create a place different from the 'wild'. As a lady missionary exclaimed, "Our jungle home prove precious to us...vegetables and flowers are all planted ..."²⁸⁵ Missionary presence brought comforts of civilization in this place.²⁸⁶ The Mission compound with established "permanent buildings, bungalow, chapel, schools, boys and girls dormitories, and cook houses" was an area of 'civilization' amongst the uncivilized tribes. The mission sought to civilize the natives who live in 'sloth and moral chaos' through 'built form and organized space' as they imposed 'square' buildings to replace native huts. This exemplified the 'cultural evangelism' of missionary work.²⁸⁷ The missionaries cleaned up the mission compound by burning down the 'poorly constructed' huts of the hill people and replacing them with 'more substantial building.' As Pettigrew wrote:

The water courses were enlarged, the tanks in front of the Croziers' cottage filled in, half the population of Kukis sent elsewhere, and their huts burnt down, and those remaining settled in more substantial buildings and some distance from the swampy and low lying land adjacent to the main stream. Jungle and undergrowth kept low by cutting down twice during the rainy season; thus exposing stagnant and other kinds of pools; regular systematic treatment of such with kerosene and Linseed oil. The result has been an appreciable decrease in malaria, and when the water and drain pipes are laid down, Kangpokpi compound will compare favorably with any other mission compound in Assam.²⁸⁸

Thus enclosed and separate from heathen villages and people, missionaries refer to the converts within the mission compound with a tone of possessiveness as 'our people'. Transformation of living conditions was visible in Christian villages as observed by a Political officer. In 1924, the Political officer on tour in the hills

²⁸⁴ Report on the Kangpokpi Mission Compound, 1920 in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 62.

²⁸⁵ Letter from Dr. and Mrs. Werelius, April 1935, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²⁸⁶ Copy of a letter from Dr.J.A.Ahlquist, Kangpokpi, Manipur State, November 1939, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

²⁸⁷ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, 'Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa', *American Ethnologist*, Vol.13, No. 1. Feb, 1986, p. 13.

²⁸⁸ Medical Report of William Pettigrew for 1923, in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 90.

described a Christian Kuki village which stood out from other hill villages. He wrote: "Tuiyang Waichong was one of the first Christian villages in this part of the hills. The people are Kipgen Kukis. The village which has recently moved to its present site ... is clean and well laid out, the houses being much further from one another than they usually are in the hill villages."²⁸⁹

Much labour were involved the establishment and maintenance of the mission compound. Teaching the tribes the value of work and wage was an important agenda of the missionaries based on what Nicholas Thomas identified as the 'doctrine of the industrial mission'. The mission and its civilizing process called for promotion of "morality, work and commerce."²⁹⁰ In his report, Pettigrew gave an account of men, women and children looking for work to do during times of poor harvest.²⁹¹ Mission school boys in the station school at Ukhrul were trained in practical lessons of labour. They were required to "look after the repairs of their hostel buildings, keep clean their compound, the school playground and the roads around the mission settlement." This was a daily work of two hours that the boys did except on Sundays.²⁹² Mission effort to civilize the tribes was notable in the area of agriculture and production as well.²⁹³ An indication of this was the mission fruit orchards looked after by 'natives'. In Ukhrul, on the proposal of the Political Agent, an experimental fruit garden was started by Pettigrew to be carried on by the scholars at the Mission school.²⁹⁴ Again in Kangpokpi, a Political Agent recorded in his diary that 'Dr, Crozier is making interesting experiments in fruit growing at Kangpokpi. He knows a good deal about it, having been brought up on a fruit farm, he tells me.'²⁹⁵ In the mission center at Kangpokpi the missionaries kept "a fairly large section reserved for garden and

²⁸⁹ Tour Diary of Political Agent in Manipur for July 1924, MSA.

²⁹⁰ Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda', p. 380.

²⁹¹ Ukhrul Report of 1896 by William Pettigrew, *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, Vol. IXXX, 1900, in Rev.Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur :Mission Reports of Rev.William Pettigrew*, p. 24.

²⁹² Ukhrul by Rev. William Pettigrew, *The Assam Baptist Missionary Conference 1910*, in Rev.Solo and Rev.Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev.William Pettigrew*, p. 63.

²⁹³ Comaroff and Comaroff, 'Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa', pp. 12-13.

²⁹⁴ Tour Diaries of the Political Agent in Manipur, April-May, 1916-1918, Acc. No. 12, R-1/S-A, MSA.

²⁹⁵ Tour Diary of the Political Agent in Manipur, May 1925-1927, Acc. No.1, R-1/S-A, MSA.

orchard for patients in that ward” with the hope that the “interest in developing it and caring for it will materially aid recovery of early cases.”²⁹⁶

An important program of mission work was to change the degraded status of women for the better through Christianity. The missionaries advocated a “more defined role for women modeled on the Victorian women.”²⁹⁷ Before Christianity tribal women or girls were seen as depressed section of the tribes. Pettigrew described how his wife trained the tribal girls in the mission station.²⁹⁸ By 1940, the mission’s program of work and commerce included women²⁹⁹ who engaged in prayer meetings and sewing class weekly under the guidance of the Missionary’s wife. Mrs. Alquist reported about her work among women in the mission field as follows:

Women here in Kangpokpi were having a weekly prayer meeting, followed by a sewing class which the women did not care to attend. There are no organized work...no collections were taken and they did not seem to have any definite aim...We had a meeting ...The sewing class are changed from Thursdays to Tuesday and it is usually well attended and I am kept very busy looking for supplies and planning how to use them in the best way. In July we had a sale and everyone seemed to enjoy it. We took in Rs.44/-. We are also taking up collections at our prayer meeting. Some hand rice and vegetables are brought which go to the church. Quite recently the women have decided to support a teacher who is also an evangelist in a village and we had the money in hand for the first year. The women seemed interested and happy planning for this new work. At our last meeting, we talked about getting a new table- cover and purdahs in the church. There are several fine women in our group. They lead the meeting well and take part in discussions and were concerned about the work in Manipur. Among our school girls there are several who I think will prove good leaders and helpers in the district.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ Medical Report of Dr. G.G.Crozier, 1920 in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 64.

²⁹⁷ Nag and Kumar, ‘Noble Savage to Gentleman: discourses of Civilisation and Missionary Modernity in North East India’, p. 122.

²⁹⁸ Rev. William Pettigrew, *Forty Years in Manipur, Assam...*, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur :Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 89.

²⁹⁹ Thomas, ‘Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda’, p. 381.

³⁰⁰ Kangpokpi Manipur, 1940 by Mrs. Alquist, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

Through Christianity, the mission attempted to bring 'tribal' women 'indoors' from fields to the 'domestic domain'.³⁰¹ Thus missionary intervention changed the 'unhappy' tribal woman into a 'happy' Christian woman who had learned skills for housekeeping, sewing and knitting and was involved in honorable mission work. Moreover, women worked toward propagating peace and harmony amongst the hill people. Of Mrs. Pettigrew's work, Rev. William Pettigrew wrote:

She is glad to have the opportunity of bringing the Tangkhul Naga and Kuhi [Kuki] girls and women together in love and friendship. It is a victory indeed to have been able to bring twelve Tangkhul Naga Christian girls from their mountain homes four days journey to Kangpokpi... fight against superstitions, clannishness and conservatism of almost an unremovable [sic] type seems now to be yielding to the Spirit's power.³⁰²

Another change the missionaries wanted to see in the converts was the absence of drinking. This 'tribal habit of drinking beer' was to be replaced by tea drinking.

...we decided to give the school boys and the six headmen of the village a feast...before going into the school their photos were taken, and then they entered and partook of "something they had never had in their lives before"-rice and chicken curry, with a plentiful supply of tea to drink. They all said that the tea was nicer than their rice beer.³⁰³

Often in mission letters, in an amusing manner, missionaries provided accounts that pointed to the difference between natives and missionaries and their modes of interaction. As Eaton has suggested, 'incorporation' of tribal practices rather than 'replacement' marked the missionary encounter with the hill tribes.³⁰⁴

On the lawn in front of the hospital ... they had their buffalo dinner with vegetables, oranges and candy. Banana leaves were used instead of plates and a good time was had by all There was danger that the wind would blow away the plates but the

³⁰¹ Comaroff, 'Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience: Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa', p. 674.

³⁰² Evangelistic and Educational Report for 1921 by Rev. William Pettigrew, in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 69.

³⁰³ The Jubilee in Manipur, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³⁰⁴ Eaton, 'Conversion to Christianity among the Nagas, 1876-1971', p. 6.

dinner piled high on each banana leaf held them down quiet well ... everyone had as much as he could eat³⁰⁵

Gifts from America soon reached the tribes through mission work. During Christmas “each received bag of Christmas gift ... bright red bag with fruit and candy with a toy for one child and a cap for each man, a warm blouse for each women ... there were also postcards in each bag and picture for the little children in some.”³⁰⁶ The traditional way of dressing was deemed inappropriate according to the standards of Christian decency.³⁰⁷ Missionaries’ moral discourse about “bodily shame and physical modesty” turned “European dresses as a sign of distinction from non-Christians.”³⁰⁸

A missionary described visits to a Christian and non Christian village in Manipur where Christians were observed to be ‘cleaner’ than the non-Christians. He wrote:

About noon we started for a Christian village that was said to be about three miles. Well...it really was about seven miles. We got there in good time and the Christians were all out to meet us with clean linen on and the whole village dressed up. I am glad these Kukis and Nagas are Christians for they are cleaner than their non-Christian friends but I had one desire while there – aside from their Soul’s salvation. I would like to start a soap factory and a handkerchief fashion among them.³⁰⁹

An essential feature of missionary accounts is the ‘narrative of conversion’ in which contrasts was drawn between conditions before and after conversion to

³⁰⁵ Letter from Dr. and Mrs. Werelius dated April 1935, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³⁰⁶ Letter from Dr. and Mrs. Werelius, April 1935, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³⁰⁷ Comaroff and Comaroff, ‘Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa’, p. 14.

³⁰⁸ Dube, ‘Paternalism and Freedom: The Evangelical Encounter in Colonial Chhattisgarh, Central India’, p. 181. Also described thus:

It was a colourful crowd as well as a joyous one, gorgeous red blankets with broad black stripes predominated but practically every colour of the rainbow was represented. A few of the people had adopted European dress, most of them wore the picturesque handwoven blanket and some a combination of the two. A non-Christian rose to leave one of the meetings and as he re-arranged the blanket wrapped around his shoulder it slipped aside revealing nothing underneath except a g-string... and a rather narrow one at that. See, Karl E Brock, 1948. Fifty Years from Headhunting, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³⁰⁹ Notes On a Visit to Kangpokpi Mission Field in Manipur, Kangpokpi- General Material, 1924-1949, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

Christianity.³¹⁰ Differences between converts and non-converts structured how the hill people were perceived. Their difference was meant to show the enormous fruit of mission work in transforming the 'heathens' into believers.³¹¹ The missionaries were happy to see the difference between their converts and non-converts. Practices of the 'tribes' that identified them as 'barbaric' and 'uncivilized' were accounted as indicative of the times before Christianity. Moreover successes in mission work and the changes it brought about became more conspicuous when the gruesome past of the converts before Christianity was accounted side to side with the conditions after the coming of Christianity.

The account of Jubilee celebration written by missionary Karl E Brock in 1948 emphasize 'the grim past' of the hill people. Fifty years before, the hill people were 'wild' and 'undisciplined' inhabitants of 'the rugged hills'.³¹²

It was only 30 years ago that thirty-five men lost their heads in a village not far from where the Jubilee celebrations was held. The people of the territory were head hunters and these groups are wiped out in a tribal uprising in 1916... And even today in one house in the non- Christian section of the village where the jubilee was held human skulls looked down from the door on the house where they are bound as a grim reminder of the days before the coming of the Christian message...When a man saw things like this and know that it is the power of Christ that has changed the heart he cannot escape the testimony of the changing power.³¹³

The transformation of 'tribes' from 'savagery' to 'civilization' was revealed in the Christian converts. Brock continued his account:

Then one look into 10,000 faces glowing with a light of transformation, statistics become more than mere numbers ... translated into terms of changed lives they become personal, vital and convincing...Manipur state Assam, India presented a picture of this type in March of this year.³¹⁴

³¹⁰ Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda', pp. 372-375.

³¹¹ Juneja, 'Mission, Encounters and Transnational History- Reflections on the use of Concepts Across Cultures' in Gross, Kumaradoss; Liebau, Eds. *Halle and the beginning of Protestant Christianity in India: communication between India and Europe*, Vol. 3, p. 1031.

³¹² Reports of Rev. and Mrs E.E Brock, March 30, 1948, ABFMS Records, 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

In missionary narrative, they identified themselves as the sole agent of change and were critical of the role of colonial in bringing about this transformation. As one missionary rhetorically put it, 'Even after the British had taken over the affairs of Manipur headhunting was practiced by the hill tribes for some time.'³¹⁵ In contrast, the work of missionaries was applauded. In an appreciation of Rev. Pettigrew's work, it was remarked: 'it is as one enters the Christian villages, sits in their conventions and hears their resonant voices raised in Christian hymns by thousands of happy people that one become aware of the transformation he was instrumental in making.'³¹⁶

SECTION V

CREATING NAGA AND KUKI IDENTITIES: LANGUAGE AND DIALECT

A list of tribes maintained by a missionary in Manipur hills included as many as twenty three.³¹⁷ These tribes were then broadly divided into the Nagas and Kukis by colonial officials for administrative purposes. In missionary representations however, the hill people, as 'heathens', shared characteristics. Differences were drawn between Nagas and Kukis initially in terms of their inclination to conversion. Of the Thadou Kukis that missionaries recognized as the dominant tribe of the Kukis, Pettigrew wrote:

The people of this clan are on the whole more open minded and more hospitable, and evidently from information gathered from the Kuki Christians, are more susceptible to the truth than the Naga tribes. They have nothing like the number of sacrificial feasts and carousals that the Nagas have and the fact of the Thadous having a chief in each village with absolute authority is a great advantage, compared to the democratic Nagas, where every Tom, Dick and Harry of the village has his say in matters that come before the village courts.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ Dr. and Mrs. W.R.Werelius, First Impressions of Kangpokpi, 1932, *Missions*, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³¹⁶ Rev. William Pettigrew, An Appreciation Victor Hugo Sword, in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei 'Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew, p. 99.

³¹⁷ Annual Report, Kangpokpi Assam, 1939 by J.A Ahlquist M.D., Assam-Kangpokpi, General Material 1924-1949, ABFMS Records, Acc. No.3257, NMML.

³¹⁸ Ukhrol Field Report for 1913 by William Pettigrew in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 40.

Thus the Kukis were differentiated from the Nagas and represented as more inclined towards conversion. In addition to this form of difference drawn between the Nagas and Kukis, language was another marker of distinction.

Communicating with people of 'diverse linguistic background' was one of the practical problems faced by administrators and missionaries alike.³¹⁹ The language situation in the hills turned out to be more complex than in the valley of Manipur. As they encountered people with their own distinctive dialects, how could they solve the language problem? The attempt of the missionaries to reduce the dominant dialect of the Nagas and Kukis into a written form helped in the construction of a Naga and Kuki ethnic identity. Ironically, translation work and the desire of the missionaries to see each tribe reading and writing in their own language created firm linguistic borders between the different tribes.

Missionaries who came to Manipur were baffled by the different dialects. How would they deal with the different dialects in the hills in order to communicate and teach the Gospel to the hill tribes? To learn the language used by people in the mission fields was crucial for missionaries to undertake mission work. Learning the different dialects of the tribes was followed by the need to reduce them into written form. Since education was an important and effective means of evangelism, missionaries needed to create a written language to educate the people who were unfamiliar with the written word.

Pettigrew and other missionaries in Manipur wrote extensively for the cause of Christianity. He prepared the primers for the Manipuri language. Studying the Meitei language even before he settled in the state, Pettigrew was able to do some translation work. By 1895, besides translating portions of the Bible in Manipuri with the help of a Manipuri *pundit*, two pamphlets, a catechism and a comparison between Christ and Krishna were written, printed and distributed among the people.³²⁰ A Manipuri grammar in Bengali script that was used as a textbook in valley schools appeared in 1903.³²¹ Pettigrew, as the pioneer missionary, had assumed that Manipuri, the

³¹⁹ Johannes Fabian, 'Missions and the Colonization of African Languages: Developments in the Former Belgian Congo', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 17, 1983, p. 166.

³²⁰ Letter to the American Baptist Missionary Union by William Pettigrew 1895, ABFMS Records, 1817-1957, Acc. No. 3250, NMML.

³²¹ John Paratt, *Wounded Land: Politics and Identity in Modern Manipur*, New Delhi, 2005, p. 63.

language used by the valley people called the Meiteis, was understood by most of the hill tribes. Having learnt the language used in the valley, Pettigrew, in 1886 wrote to the American Baptist Missionary Union that he hoped to commence mission work immediately among the Tangkhul Naga tribes in the hills because in every village of the tribe many of the tribe understands Manipuri.³²² He however realized the urgent need to learn Tangkhul dialect for evangelism in Ukhrul and other villages. Pettigrew wrote:

As more opportunities of conversing with them have been given us, we find those who can speak Manipuri with any fluency are a great deal in the minority. We feel it, therefore, important to learn their language, and this has been part of the daily routine. By the end of the rains it is hoped there will be sufficient known to enable us to go and preach the gospel to the villages around.³²³

When the Ukhrul School was opened in 1897, Pettigrew devoted his time learning the Tankhul dialect and reduced it into a written language. The Tankhul Grammar and dictionary were published in 1918.³²⁴ Primers, catechism and hymns, the story of Jesus, and a sanitary primer in the Tangkhul dialect were printed as well.³²⁵ As the mission station was shifted to Kangpokpi in 1919, the medical missionary couple Dr. and Mrs. Crozier learned the Thadou Kuki language and gave utmost importance to translating the New Testament into the Thadou Kuki language.³²⁶

Problem of communication was met by endeavoring to learn the dialect of the tribes. Learning the Tangkhul language, standardized as the Naga language, did not however seem to help the missionary reach more tribes other than the Ukhrul people. The missionary explained why he was not able to tour the other villages to preach the Gospel. He wrote that 'owing to the villages around having each a dialect of their

³²² Missionary correspondence, Pettigrew letter, 1895, ABFMS Records, Acc. No. 3250, NMML.

³²³ The Baptist Missionary Magazine, Vol. lxxvii, 1897, the New Work in Manipur Pettigrew, Ukhrul in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 19.

³²⁴ Kashim Ruivah, 'Christianity and Social Change' in Dr. Subhadra Channa, ed., *The Christian Mission: Christianity and Tribal Religion*, New Delhi, 2002, p. 125.

³²⁵ Sangma, *A History of American Baptist Mission in North – East India*, p. 243.

³²⁶ Vaiphei, 'Dr. and Mrs. G.G. Crozier', pp. 38-44.

- own, it was thought best to wait until a fluent grasp of the language was obtained³²⁷
The unknown, unwritten tongue had to be written down as well, a task that took years to finish. As he wrote:

Unlike the Manipuris, the Tangkhul Nagas had no written language, not even the rudiments of an alphabet. Therefore, like brother missionaries of Assam, I had to reduce the language to writing. This was an interesting and yet an arduous task, taking daily toil for three years, to furnish a vocabulary and a grammar. Toil was forgotten; however, when I was able to preach the gospel in this hitherto unknown tongue. As one pertinently said, "You must be the only white man in the world who can speak it" and this is true.³²⁸

The missionaries encountered in the hills "no less than fourteen different tribes" who had their "own distinctive languages."³²⁹ Faced with a language problem in the mission field where each village had a distinct language of their own, the missionaries had to identify one dialect used by the most dominant tribe. The need to create order arises out of the bewildering linguistic situation that was encountered. This was done by imposing existent vehicular languages or promoting particular local languages to a vehicular status.³³⁰ As the missionaries encountered linguistic disorder in the hills, they reacted to it with an attempt to create order. They classified the languages of the tribes as dialects. At the same time they promoted the dominant dialect to the 'status of the standardized language' of an ethnic group.³³¹

The Tangkhul Nagas, amongst whom the first mission station was established, were identified as the tribe 'who exceed in numbers all the other fourteen tribes inhabiting Manipur'. According to the 1901 census, the Tangkhuls a distinct people with language, customs and habits peculiar to themselves numbered about 20,000 in

³²⁷ Report from the Tangkhul Naga Field, Pettigrew, 1899 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 17.

³²⁸ The Baptist Missionary Magazine, November 1905 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 39.

³²⁹ Manipur: A Pioneer Work by William Pettigrew, The Baptist Missionary Magazine, September 1905 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 33.

³³⁰ Fabian, 'Missions and the Colonization of African Languages: Developments in the Former Belgian Congo', p. 167.

³³¹ Patrick Harries, 'The Roots of Ethnicity: Discourse and the Politics of Language Construction in South-East Africa', *African Affairs* Vol. 87, No. 346, January 1988, pp. 37-38.

all.³³² Thus identified as the most dominant tribe the missionaries attempted to promote Tangkhul dialect as the common language. A missionary in Manipur expressed this purpose clearly as follows:

Nearly all the villages differ in dialect and have difficulty in understanding each other. Ukhul through its mission tends to unify the language by making its dialect universal for the tribe.³³³

In the Mission school at Ukhul, students were taught Tangkhul, Manipuri and English. Tangkhul, being the mother tongue, was pronounced to be the unifying language of the Nagas:

For the school at Ukhul it was decided to introduce the Roman Character. At first the boys started with a small English Primer and after the first primer in their own language was prepared and printed they started on this as well, so that they learn to read and write their own tongue as well as English.³³⁴

In the school at Ukhul “the boys are being taught their own language and Manipuri. A few of them who seem to have an aptitude for English are being taught this language.”³³⁵ Manipuri and English were crucial for supplying ‘sufficient education’ to hill people. This type of education would enable them to ‘fill the posts of interpreters and peons’ which would in turn simplify the administration.³³⁶ The fact that the tribes were taught English and Manipuri also showed that the mother tongue was considered inadequate that has to be learnt along with other languages like Manipuri and English. This way of solving the language question was the ‘linguistic law of an evolutionary type’ that missionaries invoke as they demonstrate that certain languages are more superior to others.³³⁷

³³² Manipur: A Pioneer Work by William Pettigrew, Baptist Missionary Magazine, 1905, November in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 38.

³³³ 1913 Um Fox in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 45.

³³⁴ Ukhul 1896 by Pettigrew, The Baptist Missionary Magazine Vol. Lxxviii, 1898 in Rev. Solo and Rev. Mahangthei, *Forty Years Mission in Manipur: Mission Reports of Rev. William Pettigrew*, p. 21.

³³⁵ Report from the Tangkhul Naga Field, Pettigrew, 1899, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³³⁶ Lt.Col.J.Shakespear, *Manipur Under British Management, 1891-1907*, Shillong, 1907, p. 9.

³³⁷ Fabian, ‘Missions and the Colonization of African Languages: Developments in the Former Belgian Congo’, p. 175.

Linguistic differences continued to be a problem and hindered the spread of the Gospel message among the hill tribes as one missionary lamented, 'With all our churches and converts as yet only a few have heard the gospel message'. Some tribes were neglected due to difficulty in language. Although missionary work was undertaken among the Tankhul Nagas from the start, all so called Naga tribes were not easily reached by the missionaries through their language. The differences between people in the hills were not just between Kukis and Nagas but that amongst different tribes numbering more than twenty.³³⁸ A missionary reports about two different tribes who had been untouched due to difference in language and other characters:

The Maring people are a very peculiar and superstitious peoples...I have wanted to put a picture of some of them but so far have not been able to get one because of their fear of the camera.³³⁹

This year we also have converts from the Maram Naga tribe. This is the first convert from this tribe. These two tribes have been neglected, one might say, as there are no schools for them and no evangelistic work has been done for them because of the language difficulty and their suspicion of all people.³⁴⁰

Faced with the difficulty of reducing the language of each tribe, the missionaries employed the pre-existing colonial administrators' understanding of the hill people as Nagas and Kukis. The missionaries promoted a unifying language for these different tribes.

As tribes known as Kukis from other section of the hills response to evangelism, it was necessary to learn new dialect and establish new mission stations in Manipur. The missionaries drive for evangelism was followed by the desire to establish a mission station among the Kukis described as an 'interesting tribe of nomads'.³⁴¹ The zeal to spread the Gospel motivated the missionaries to make further enquiries about the hills and its inhabitants. Pettigrew reported:

³³⁸ Dr. Alhquist letter, Advance Baptist Work in Manipur, Assam, October 1939 American Baptist Foreign Mission, Kangpokpi, Assam, 1937, ABFMS Records, 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³³⁹ Evangelistic Field Report by Dr. Werelius, Annual Report of the American Baptist Foreign Mission, Kangpokpi, Assam, 1937, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ Report of Rev. W. Pettigrew, 1920, in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 66. Also, pp. 36-37.

Enquiries made during a tour of investigation in South West Manipur elicited the fact that, that the western portion of Manipur, north of the Cachar road, is inhabited by these Thado branches of the Kuki clan and the [] country south of the Cachar road, although having a good many of the Thado clan villages, is to a greater extent occupied by the different branches of the Lushai and Old Kuki clans. The extraordinary thing that strikes one is the predominance of the Thado language among all these many and varied branches. Even the Kabui Nagas who occupy a good number of the villages to the north and south of the Cachar road, and whose population is estimated at about 6000, use the Thado language in intercourse with village and village. Thado is no doubt the lingua franca for all these branches of Kukis and Lushai who occupy this region, and there is no doubt that whenever mission work is established in these sections, Thado should be the medium of instruction for all. Whoever reduces the language to writing, and produces literature will not only reach the Thado clan, but the many and varied clans that cover the Southern and Western Hills of Manipur.³⁴²

Like the Tangkhuls amongst the Nagas, the Thadous were identified as the dominant Kukis and their dialect was the dominant language to be used for evangelism among the Kukis.³⁴³ By about 1915, a Thado Kuki Primer had been prepared and printed to be used by the Kukis in the school at Ukhrul and in the Western Hills of Manipur.³⁴⁴

The efforts of the missionaries to standardize the language contributed to a new process of identity formation.³⁴⁵ The Tangkhul dialect for the Nagas, and the Thado dialect for the Kukis, were recognized by the missionaries as the most dominant and pervasive language used by tribes included within the fold of the Nagas and Kukis. Thus the Tangkhul and Thadou dialects were promoted as the Naga and Kuki languages respectively amongst the oral dialects spoken in the hills. A grammar book, hymns books and other forms of literature came to be printed in the written language and were taught at mission schools. Reducing dialects to written language

³⁴² Ukhrul Field Report 1913 in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, pp. 39-40.

³⁴³ Rev. William Pettigrew, 'Manipur and Two of its Hill Tribes' in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 127-128.

³⁴⁴ Ukhrul Field Report for 1916, by Rev William Pettigrew, in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, pp. 49-50.

³⁴⁵ Sajal Nag, 'Making of the Naga Self: Nationalist and Post Nationalist Modes of Nation Making in South Asia', p. 10.

created borders between the tribes of Manipur. A sense of 'distinctive tribal identity' emerged with the increase in number of Christians from all sections of the hill people.³⁴⁶ In 1939, a Kuki Christian Conference of the American Baptist Christian Mission was founded by Kukis from the Naga Hills and Manipur. They resolved to issue a monthly paper the 'Herald', a missionary was appointed as its editor. In his report, Dr. Ahlquist, the missionary gave a translation of the name 'Herald' as 'Lhangsam' in 'Kuki'. The fact that this was a Thado word was an indication that at least for the missionaries, the Thado dialect was regarded as the Kuki language at this point of time.³⁴⁷

In terms of Christianity, written language becomes instruments of modernization in contradiction to "dialects that embodied beliefs and superstitions of pagan society." This contradiction between language and dialect grew into a social expression of the contradiction between the Christian and the pagan.³⁴⁸

Member of Kacha Naga church on Manipur side Their plea was "give us a teacher", they said, "We are Christians, but we do not know anything. We feel like crazy as we try to help others who are interested in becoming Christians because we do not know how to help them". There are difficulties because they belong to a dialect group whose language is unintelligible to the rest of the Kachas of Manipur where we have some Christians.³⁴⁹

As Pettigrew wrote of the Koms:

The Koms although small in number are very patriotic. They longed to be independent as far as their mother tongue is concerned. They have prepared and printed an Elementary Primer for their schools, and now in the press is a hymn-book in their own tongue ... this is another language which their young evangelists have been instrumental in reducing to writing under our care and training.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁴⁷ Annual Report, Kangpokpi, Assam, 1939 by J.A.Ahlquist, M.D. Assam-Kangpokpi - General Material 1924-1949, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³⁴⁸ Harries, 'The Roots of Ethnicity: Discourse and the Politics of Language Construction in South-East Africa', p. 44-45.

³⁴⁹ Kangpokpi Manipur, 1940 by Mrs.Ahlquist American Baptist Foreign Mission, Kangpokpi, Assam, 1937, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³⁵⁰ Rev.William Pettigrew, 'Manipur and Two of its Hill Tribes' in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 127-128.

However, in reducing some dialects of the hill people into written languages, the missionaries still encountered tribes within both Naga and Kuki groups who had nothing to do with the dominant, written down Kuki and Naga language. In fact, Manipuri was often used among converts who awaited the translation of the Scriptures in their own language:

The Manipuri version has a ready sale among our Christians who have not yet anything of scripture in their own language. The Anal Kukis, the Kom Kukis, the Sopvoma Nagas, and even the Thadou Kukis are welcoming this version, and a large number of copies have been distributed. Owing to the need of using the Manipuri Language at Kangpokpi at the services and even by the school teachers in the day and Sunday schools, this version has been found of great use to us at head quarters.³⁵¹

CONCLUSION

Conversion and responses to Christianity naturally divided the natives into converts and non-converts. Converts were forced to break away from their villages by their non-Christian chief.

One village at present is having the most interesting experience. It is a village of over one hundred houses. The village is formed into two sections separated by a ravine. The whole of the section south of the ravine have accepted Christ, a matter of 40 houses. Of the 57 houses north of the ravine, 39 have taken the stand also. 25 houses led by the headman or chief of whole village still remain. This chief like many other chiefs among the Tangkhul Nagas is determined to cause trouble and distress. The chief insists that the converts on his side of the ravine removed themselves to areas far removed from the village and ...from their permanent wet rice fields.³⁵²

Breaking up of villages was common as more and more people become Christians. "There is a strong movement towards Christianity among the Tangkhuls.

³⁵¹ Evangelistic, Educational and Literary Report for 1931, Rev William Pettigrew, in Zeliang, *History of Christianity in Manipur: Source Material*, p. 123.

³⁵² Annual report from Manipur, North East Area and Sadar, Assam by Rev. William Pettigrew, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

One of the Evangelists Phenitphong reports that ninety six houses in non-Christian villages have been torn down to be rebuilt in Christian villages.”³⁵³

Initially hateful toward converts and Christianity, the non-converts, become more tolerant and began to associate with the converts. They also treated the missionaries well. A missionary described the change in unbelievers’ attitude – “In this section our people have suffered and in some places are still suffering from persecution. But it seems that a change is coming. On two occasions the non-Christians volunteered to help carry my load to the next village without pay.”³⁵⁴ On another occasion, “Christian headman brought me a goat as a sign of welcome ... I thanked him and said it would make me very happy if they could take the goat and have a feast ... the headman not only joined in the feast but also sat with us in the Christian services – a reminder of what the spirit can accomplish in a few years.”³⁵⁵

The central point that I however would like to make is that administrators and missionaries, as agents of colonialism, had their differences. The civilizing mission of both the agents of colonialism differed. Central to mission projects was evangelization and spreading the Gospel. Yet, the administrative construction of the hill people as Nagas and Kukis reinforced missionary perceptions. Moreover, the intention of the missionaries’ to make the tribes read and write in their own dialect established linguistic borders between the Kukis and Nagas. Although controlled by the administrators to some extent, the missionaries cooperated with the state only for the purpose evangelism. The distinctiveness of the missionary encounter lay in the fact that it was seen as an alternate and more beneficial authority for the hill people.

³⁵³ Kangpokpi Manipur, 1940 by Mrs. Alhquist ABFMS Records, 1817-1969, Acc.No.3257, NMML.

³⁵⁴ Annual Report, Kangpokpi Assam by Rev Karl E Brock, 1941, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

³⁵⁵ Station Letter, Karl E. Brock, Kangpokpi Assam, January 20, 1942, ABFMS Records 1817-1969, Acc. No. 3257, NMML.

CHAPTER - 3

REINTERPRETING THE KUKI REBELLION

During 1917-1919, a confederation of chiefs in the hills of Manipur persistently refused to obey the orders of the state and supply coolies for France. Demonstrating a spirit of defiance against British authority, they avoided meetings with the British officers. After an unsuccessful negotiation with the Political Agent who went to the hills to meet them, the Kukis rose in armed resistance against the colonial state. The chiefs and their villagers formed themselves into armed groups and waged war against the British. The rebellion continued till April 1919. Both the British officers and the rebels engaged in killing, burning villages, destroying property, 'looting' and 'raiding'. In this paper, I have attempted to look at the Kuki rebellion, described as "the most serious incident in the history of Manipur and its relations with its hill subjects."³⁵⁶ It cost the colonial state twenty eight lakhs of rupees to quell the rebellion, and many lives were lost.³⁵⁷

Ethnic consciousness among the tribes grouped as Kukis was not marked out in the uprising. Although it was officially known as the Kuki Rebellion in history, the experience of the rebellion did not unite the people in the hills. This chapter will be an in depth study of the Kuki Rebellion based on Administrative Reports, military officers' accounts, tour diaries of Political Agents during the uprising and the Foreign and Political Department files at the National Archives, New Delhi. Section I deals with the different ways in which diverse groups of Kukis appropriated the rebellion. The experience of the rebellion had failed to promote a sense of unity among the Kukis. Section II provides a story of the unrest constructed from colonial records. Section III attempts to contextualize the rebellion. It identifies what the colonial state understood as the grievances of the Kukis, and discusses their forms of protests against the British. Section IV deals with the relationships between the Kukis, Nagas and Manipuris. I argue that there was no hostility between the Nagas and Kukis *per se*. Groups of friendly and rebellious hill people cannot be divided within the neat

³⁵⁶ Col. L. W. Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, London, 1929, p. 224.

³⁵⁷ Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering On Assam: from 1883-1941*, Delhi, 1983 reprint (First Published 1942), p. 79.

classifications of Nagas and Kukis. Section V discussed how the rebellion was suppressed by the colonial state.

SECTION I

APPROPRIATION OF THE RISING BY DIFFERENT GROUPS

The Uprising termed as 'The Kuki rebellion' by the colonial state was interpreted differently by diverse groups such as the Thadou Kukis, the Zou tribe, activist for Kuki homeland and groups propagating 'Zomi' identity as well as the Meiteis or the Manipuri people of the plains. There are some who called the Kuki rebellion as a Thadou war.³⁵⁸ Thadou scholars and others have questioned the relevance of calling the unrest a 'Kuki rebellion' and have argued that it is more appropriate to call it a Thadou war. Kipgen,³⁵⁹ a Thadou scholar, argued that since the chiefs and leaders imprisoned at Sadiya after the suppression of the rebellion were Thadous, it is indeed a Thadou war. He further argued that all non-Thadou as well as the Nagas remained loyal to the British. Seen as a purely Thadou rebellion, the participation of other groups like the Zous, and the Anals are ignored or reduced to insignificance in this interpretation. Thus the Kuki rebellion was appropriated by Thadou tribes to enhance their prestige as the most powerful tribe.

The Kuki rebellion was also claimed to be a Kuki war of independence by P.S.Haokip, then president of the Kuki National Organisation.³⁶⁰ Kukis, he goes on to say, proudly played the role of defending their sovereignty and freedom in their own land. This was taken as a significant moment in their history of struggle for a Kuki homeland. As such, the Kuki National Organisation used the rebellion as a rallying point to justify their demand for a Kuki homeland. Aspiring for a Kuki homeland, Haokip lumped together as many as thirty-six tribes within the term 'Kuki' including other groups such as Anal, Chiru, Chothe, Guite, Gangte, Hmar, Paite, Simte, Vaiphei and Zou.³⁶¹ A certain Lenin H. Kuki posted an article about the Kuki Rising of 1917-

³⁵⁸ See, Khaikhotinthang Kipgen, *The Thadou Kukis*, Imphal, 1982.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

³⁶⁰ P.S Haokip, *Zale'n- Gam :The Kuki Nation*, Zale'n Gam, 1998.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-60.

1919.³⁶² Writing on behalf of a Kuki insurgent group, the Kuki National Organisation, he saluted those who had laid down their lives for the cause of the Kuki people and their land. He represented the Kuki Rebellion as the Kukis' war of independence and freedom fought against 'colonial repression'. According to him, the Kukis acted with a spirit of nationalism during the rebellion. In this article, leadership was attributed to a Thadou Chief Chengjapao, head of the Thadous, who took the initiative to resist the colonial state's labour recruitment by giving orders to all 'leading Thadou Chiefs'. They were seen to be followed by 'other influential chiefs'.

Thus, the Thadous were projected as the most significant actors in this much celebrated 'War' against colonial rule while the 'others' were relegated as mere followers of the "similar steps" taken by the Thadou Chiefs. Interpretation of the Rebellion as a "national movement" of the Kukis in which the Thadou Chiefs acted out their sense of nationalism resulted in the synonymity of 'Thadou' and 'Kuki' ethnic identities. According to the writer, the Kuki rising also gave the Kukis a 'history' that made them worthy of a "stable political autonomous state of the Kukis."³⁶³ As a reaction to the Thadou claim for supremacy over all so-called Kukis, the non-Thadou groups began to withdraw and disown the term Kuki.³⁶⁴

The Zous, a non-Thadou tribe, on the other hand, celebrate their participation in the rising, marginalised by the proponents of a purely Thadou war. They appropriate the rebellion by calling it the 'Zou War'. For the Zou tribe, the rebellion was a "Zou Gaal also known as the Great Kuki Rebellion ... war fought by the Zou Warrior in the hills of Manipur."³⁶⁵ The writer of this article on the rebellion also mentions that Zou chiefs collaborated with the Haokip clan of the Thadous to resist the colonial rulers. There was no depiction of the Thadous as the leaders of the rebellion. In fact, the Zou Chiefs were represented as more willing and courageous in confronting the colonial forces than the Thadou Chiefs.³⁶⁶ Others contend that "the anti-colonial legacy of the Zou is a tribute to the multi-ethnic people of Manipur

³⁶² Lenin H. Kuki, '91st Anniversary of Kuki/ Rising 1917-1919 by the Kuki,' Sunday, December 21, 2008 <http://www.zalentimes.itgo.com/articles.html>.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ Lal Dena, 'The Kuki-Naga Conflict: Juxtaposed in the Colonial Context,' in Kailash S. Aggarwal ed., *Dynamics of Identity and Intergroup Relations in North-East India*, Shimla, 1999, p. 186.

³⁶⁵ The Zou Rebellion 1917-1919, <http://zolengthe.net/2008/09/17/zou-gaal-1917-1919-ad/>

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

itself', and introduced the Zou tribe as a 'non-Thadou tribe' who had participated in the so-called 'Kuki Rising' which was a 'bold attempt to oust the white imperialist from Manipur'.³⁶⁷ This indicates a counter view to the Thadou interpretation of the Kuki Rebellion as a purely 'Thadou Rebellion' and the depiction of the Thadous as the dominant tribes of the Kukis in Manipur Hills.

Through this interpretation of the rebellion as the 'Zou War', other tribes emerge as equally important as the Thadous. In support of their claim, the Zous also have a folk song composed in the Zou dialect on the occasion of the rebellion. The Folk Song was translated into English as follows:

The seafaring White Imperialist coils like the 'kiil' plant,
Tremors of earthquake do quiver the Zo world,
Tis the land of my birth: I shall not part with it!
Stain'd with blood is my Sword
That has routed the adversaries of Zoland,
I shall yet fight with the wild Boar, injured.³⁶⁸

For those groups like the Zomi Re-unification Organisation(ZRO), who do not like the use of the term 'Kuki', the Zomi Rebellion showed the unity of the hill people whom they would like to call 'the Zomis in the hills of Manipur and Burma'. Talking about the same uprising, they label the unrest as a 'Zomi Rebellion'. The Zomi Re-unification Organization acknowledged the different participants in the rebellion and sees it as the Thadou, Zou and Haka Resistance Movement in the Chin Hills. They also picked the name 'Zou Gaal' or 'Zou War' as the most popular of the many names by which the Rebellion was known. Unlike the KNO reflections on the Kuki Rebellion, this group did not ignore the Zou Chiefs and their efforts. It was written, "In the South of Manipur, Hiangtam Fort was a noteworthy example where the Zou Tribe of the Zomi picked up the gauntlet. The British Soldiers fought hard for seven

³⁶⁷Legacy of Anti-Colonial Resistance: Zou Gaal (1917-1919), <http://zougaal.blogspot.com/2008/09/legacy-of-anti-colonial-resistance-zou.html>.

³⁶⁸ quoted in, David Vumlallian Zou, "Raiding the dreaded past: Representations of headhunting and human sacrifice in north-east India", *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (n.s) 39, 1 (2005), p. 89.

days continuously at the Hiangtam Fort. In this battle, Langzachin of Behiang, and Goulun of Hiangtam village were the leaders of the Zomi.”³⁶⁹

The Meiteis or Manipuris looked at the rebellion as a “testimony to patriotism of the Kukis, and a strong tie between the two people of hill and valley in any emergency.”³⁷⁰ They attributed an important role in the rebellion to the Manipuri pretender named Chingakham Sana Jaoba Singh³⁷¹ or simply brushed it off as a small scale challenge to colonial rule, a suitable illustration of the disunity amongst the hill tribes.³⁷² Thus one can see that the Kuki rebellion was remembered by different groups in their own interests. This was an indication that differences exist within those groups that are considered to share a Kuki identity.

SECTION II

THE STORY OF THE UNREST

The Maharaja of Manipur had offered to raise recruits for Labour Corps for service in France for the British during the course of the First World War. Accordingly, in March 1917, a summon was issued to the chiefs in the hills to do so. Four influential Kuki chiefs refused to supply coolies and ordered the other chiefs also not to do so. The headman of the Tangkhuls, a large Naga tribe in the hills east of Manipur valley, followed suit. However, despite the objections raised, the state managed to recruit 2000 Nagas and Kukis. The first Manipur Labour Corps was sent to France in May 1917.³⁷³ A second request for labour corps was made in the following month and a durbar was arranged by the British officers in Manipur for the Kuki chiefs to attend in order to explain to them the reasons why their men were wanted, the nature of the work required of them, the pay to be received etc. The Kuki chiefs however refused to attend the durbar.

³⁶⁹ Zomi Re-unification Organization, ‘Zomi Rebellions: Thadou, Zou and Haka Resistance Movement. Source <http://www.zogam.org/history.asp?article=history> 1692.

³⁷⁰ Goshwami, Hareshwar, *History of the People of Manipur*, Imphal, 2004, p. 286.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

³⁷² John Paratt, *Wounded Land: Politics and Identity in Modern Manipur*, New Delhi, 2005, p. 42.

³⁷³ Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering On Assam: from 1883-1941*, p. 79.

The Kuki chiefs like Ngulkhup of Mombi and Ngulbul of Longya in the hills south of Manipur valley denounced state authority and were not reluctant to use force.³⁷⁴ Moreover, it appeared that the attempt to recruit coolies was not successful because of the influence of Khutinthang, chief of Jampi and hereditary head of the Thado clan, and Pache, the Chief of Chassad and hereditary head of the Haokip clan. If these two chiefs brought in their men, the British believed that the 'smaller chiefs' would do the same. Once negotiation failed in October 1917,³⁷⁵ Higgins, the officiating Political Agent attempted to arrest Ngulkhup, chief of Mombi, because he once again threatened to raid and kill the women and children of other Kuki tribes if they supplied coolies to the British. Failing to arrest the chief who went into hiding in the jungle, the British troops collected the livestock and burnt the completely deserted village.³⁷⁶ Higgins and his troops received orders to return to Imphal and take no further action against the Kukis.

With this open and relentless disobedience of state orders by the Kukis, the programme for the recruitment of coolies was suspended.³⁷⁷ Attempts at recruiting coolies from other villages were not successful also because most villages were deserted by the time the colonial officers arrived. The British were forced to reverse their policy. Notices were issued by the British. Chiefs, even if they had opposed recruitment on the earlier occasion, if they now came in quietly, would be more leniently dealt with. It was further decided that the Political Agent would make another effort to bring the recalcitrant chiefs to reason.³⁷⁸ However, the response of the chief continued to be negative. Reports arrived about the gathering of Kuki chiefs at Ukha: 'They were said to have sworn an oath to resist by force any attempt to impress coolies by force, to arrest them or to burn their villages'. Licensed guns were demanded from Naga villages that were to be used in armed resistance against

³⁷⁴ Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, p. 210.

³⁷⁵ Webster's Letter dated 7th November 1917, in 'Rebellion of the Kuki tribes in Manipur and in the Upper Chindwin's District in Burma and of the Chins in the Southern Chin Hills. Reports on the Operations Against Them', (hereafter, *Rebellion of Kuki Tribes ... Operations Against Them*), Foreign and Political Department, Secret-External Proceedings, July 1918, Nos. 7-131, National Archives of India (hereafter, NAI).

³⁷⁶ Tour Diary of J.C. Higgins, Esq, I.C.S, Political Officer, Southern Kuki (Sugnu, Mombi), Column No.1, (hereafter *Tour Diary of J.C. Higgins.*), for Jan.-Feb. 1918, Acc. No. 12, R-1/S-A Manipur State Archives (hereafter, MSA).

³⁷⁷ Shakespear, *'History of the Assam Rifles'*, p. 210.

³⁷⁸ Kuki Rebellion, 1920, Foreign and Political Department Secret E Proceedings, November 1920, Nos.105-107, Acc. No. 232, R-1/S-D, MSA. (hereafter, *Kuki Rebellion, 1920, MSA*).

any British officer.³⁷⁹ The chiefs of Mombi and Longya, identified as the principal rebel chiefs, now sent in messages to the Political Agent: their country was closed to the British.³⁸⁰ It was clear that the authoritarian and paternalistic notices of the British rulers had failed to induce the chiefs to come in.³⁸¹

In December 1917, the British officials decided to call the recalcitrant chiefs for explanation; they would burn the villages of those who refused to do so.³⁸² The rebel Kukis retaliated by raiding the police stations and destroying rest houses. The rebels also killed chowkidars, damaged telegraph lines and blocked the road to Burma.³⁸³ Rumors about the rebels marching on to Imphal valley caused much panic and trouble in the valley during the rebellion.³⁸⁴ On another occasion, 'There was a panic in sadar bazaar at Imphal and a stampede amongst the bazaar people mostly women'.³⁸⁵ Signs of British presence like bungalow, hill rest houses, outposts or *thanas* as well as all who work for the British like *chaukidars*, *chaprassis*, *lambus*, *dakwallas*, were victims of the rebellion as shown by information about rebel outrage.³⁸⁶ Other *chaukidars* if not killed were threatened. Higgins reported the terror that *chaukidars* felt during the rebellion. He said,

I found the bungalow chaukidar at Waikhong drunk than usual, having been drowning his sorrows consequent on being told by the Kukis of Aihang that the bungalow and himself would suffer the same fate as the Tengnoupal bungalow and chaukidar. In the evening I received a letter from Mr. Cosgrave from Thoubal saying that the head constables, writer constable, and a gaola resident at Tengnoupal had been found murdered and that the fate of the other residents was unknown.³⁸⁷

The rebels singled out Government servants in order to 'intimidate people from working for Government or the State authorities'.³⁸⁸ The opposition between

³⁷⁹ Tour Diary of J.C Higgins, for Jan-Feb 1918, MSA.

³⁸⁰ Shakespear, 'History of the Assam Rifles', p. 211.

³⁸¹ Kuki Rebellion, 1920, MSA.

³⁸² Tour Diary of J.C.Higgins, for October 1917, MSA.

³⁸³ Shakespear, 'History of the Assam Rifles', p. 213.

³⁸⁴ Progress of the Operations Against Kukis, 1919, Acc.No.74,R-1/S-A, MSA.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Tour Diary of J.C Higgins, for Jan-Feb 1918, MSA.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ Dated 22st January, 1918, Office Copies of the Tour Diary of W.A. Cosgrave, esquire I.C.S Political Agent in Manipur from January to March 1918, (hereafter Tour Diary of W.A.Cosgrave ... January to March, 1918), MSA.

those who worked for the government and the rebels was clearly shown in an account in which a state *lambu* reported that the Kukis sent a *dao* to the big village Maram and ordered the villagers to cut the Telegraph line. The state *lambu* then threatened the people of Maram that if they do anything of this kind they would be imprisoned.³⁸⁹ Chaison, a Kuki interpreter sent out to meet rebel Chiefs, was maltreated by rebel villagers. Men armed with *daos*, spears and guns intended to keep him as a prisoner and threatened to kill him if any rebels were harmed by the sepoys. His *pagri* and blanket were seized from him before he managed to escape.³⁹⁰ According to an information received about rebel actions, it was reported that a Kuki hill *lambu* was robbed by a band of thirty Kukis headed by Thangkhulet Kuki Chief of Khoiru village. It is interesting to note that the rebels spared the Kuki peon and let him go but 'took away from him his *parwanas* and belongings'.³⁹¹ Explicit in the rebels behaviour was their utter dislike for the British and their rule and sympathy shown to their fellow hill man.

The colonial state responded by initiating operations against the rebels in the hills surrounding the valley of Manipur. The weather, the difficult terrains of rivers and forests and the possibility of disease were some of the problems they encountered. Besides, the 'active scantily-clad Kukis', who, though using inferior arms, 'know their hills and forests, carry no packs, do not bother themselves over supplies, who are rarely seen in their forests, and who are adapted to guerilla and jungle warfare'³⁹² were formidable opponents. As the punitive columns of the colonial state and the rebels engaged in armed conflict, and the burning of villages continued for almost two years, the colonial rulers envisaged military operations. Negotiations were opened with the leading rebel chiefs. They were promised a fair trial and were assured that no further recruitment of coolies would take place if the Kuki rebels surrendered with their guns.³⁹³ The British troops divided the hills into four areas with a base each for mobile detachments scattered all over the hills to operate against the rebels instead of chasing the rebels around. Want of food was acute as *jhum* cultivation was hampered.

³⁸⁹ Dated 14th January 1918, Letter from W.A. Cosgrave to J.E. Webster, MSA.

³⁹⁰ Webster's Letter Dated 5.1.1918 Camp, Vaselui, MSA.

³⁹¹ Webster's Letter dated 25th January, 1918, in 'Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them,' NAI.

³⁹² Shakespear, 'History of the Assam Rifles', p. 236.

³⁹³ Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering On Assam: from 1883-1941*, p. 81.

The Kuki rebels started to give in. The civil authorities resumed political authority in April 1919.³⁹⁴

SECTION III

CONTEXTUALIZING THE REBELLION

How was the rebellion reconstructed by British officials as they sought to analyse the actions of the rebels and identify their grievances? One can read the colonial state's viewpoint about the Kuki rebellion from official documents like administrative reports, and telegrams and letters sent by British officers engaged in punitive operations against them. To dare to disobey, much less offer an armed resistance against civilized British rule was counted as an act of insanity. The primitive Kukis were considered to have lost their senses in rebelling against the British. In their explanation of the rebellion, one can see that the British rulers were more concerned with why the Kukis *dared* to rebel against them. The colonial perception was that tribal rebellions are results of their primitiveness.

But as colonial officials delved more into the records, there was a consensus among the British that the immediate cause of the Kuki rebellion was recruitment for the Labour Corps to be sent to France in 1917.³⁹⁵ One officer on tour in the hills during the rebellion expressed his opinion that the government should pay the expenses of their tours in the hills. He said that this was reasonable because 'they are directly due to the raising of Labour Corps for the benefit and use of government and it is up to them to stand the shot'.³⁹⁶ The Kukis, he argued, who do not want to send coolies for France, were provoked by the British to rebel against them. Indeed from the start, the order to supply recruit was what the Kuki chiefs disobeyed in 1917.

In the administrative report for the year 1916-1917, the colonial officer wrote about the rebellion as follows: 'the initiators of the movement have taken up an attitude defiant of all authority. The opposition of the recruiting was entirely due to the reluctance of the ignorant hill men to undertake service in an unknown country so

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

³⁹⁵ Kuki Rebellion 1920, MSA.

³⁹⁶ Progress of the Operations Against Kukis, 1919, MSA.

far from their homes.³⁹⁷ This was considered especially true because other hill tribes had willingly and efficiently served as coolies to assist the British rulers and were content with the pay.

Labour Corps had been raised for France in 1916 amongst various clans of Nagas, Lushais and others, who willingly came in, having in many cases done this sort of work for Government before in border expeditions, and knew the work and good pay. Such had done extremely well wherever they were sent, but in 1917 more were needed, to supply which it was necessary to tap other sources, viz. the various Kuki clans inhabiting the hill regions of the native State of Manipur, a people who had never left their hills and knew but little of us and our ways. Optimism too strong with the higher authorities soon showed the fallacy of trying to induce these people to leave their country for the unknown, and the Chiefs, with whom the first attempt was made, declined to send men. A further effort on the part of the Political Agent only produced angry refusals...The start of this rebellion is due to our procrastination in not dealing at once and fully with it when the trouble first showed itself.³⁹⁸

Thus in official explanation, the rebellion was caused by the ignorance of the Kukis and their isolation in the hills. This had made them fearful of the outside world. The rebellion, according to the colonial rulers, could have been prevented if they had dealt with the troubled ignorant people at once.

The Kukis however had their own explanations. In a memorandum for mercy submitted by imprisoned rebel chiefs to the authority, the chiefs wrote that they had requested the Political Agent not to recruit coolies from them since 'it is the custom of the Kukis to bring the head of the dead man wherever he died.'³⁹⁹ The hesitation to go to France was not because of 'ignorance', 'isolation' or fear, the chiefs had insisted, but because it would interrupt the custom of the Kukis.

Converting hill tribes into coolies suitable for carrying loads in the hills was a part of colonial policy. In the treaty of 1833 signed between the British Government and the Manipur State, the Manipur Raja had agreed to furnish a number of Nagas to assist in the construction of the road between the territories of the British government

³⁹⁷ Administration Report of the Manipur State 1916-1917, p. 1, Acc. No. 38, R-N-2/S-A, MSA.

³⁹⁸ Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles*, pp. 209-212.

³⁹⁹ Office of the Political Agent, Special file No. 385, 1919, NAI, New Delhi, quoted in Dr. Chishti, *The Kuki Uprising in Manipur: 1917-1920*, Guwahati and Delhi, 2004, pp. 45-46.

and Manipur. In case war broke out with Burma, the Raja was required to provide hill porters to assist in transporting the ammunition and baggage of British troops. Thus the hill tribes figured in the treaties between the colonial state and the Manipur Raja as an important labour resource essential for the expansion and consolidation of British rule.⁴⁰⁰ The Kukis too were utilized by the colonial state as hill porters. They were also respected for their role in the defence mechanism of the British. 'The Kookies... have done admirable service as hill- porters on dangerous expeditions, and they are the only tribe able to defend themselves against the Angamis who have, as numerous reports show, a real respect for them.'⁴⁰¹ The Kukis especially were seen as the best coolies amongst the hill people. In 1882, Lieutenant Dun wrote about the potential of the groups who had played a prominent part in the Kuki rebellion:

In appearance they exactly resemble the Lushai Kukis, who have settled this year in Cachar, but they are slightly superior in physique... They are the best carriers in the state and for military transport possess the great advantage of being able to protect themselves to a great extent. They are apt to give way to fits of childish rage and passion if hurried or annoyed on the march. They drink a good deal of liquor: but I never saw one intoxicated...they are keen hunters, pay their chiefs a religious devotion, and are delighted at any opportunity of a fight.⁴⁰²

It was as early as 1895, that Kuki refusal to supply coolies disturbed the colonial authorities. The Political Agent wrote of the Kukis who had refused to supply coolies:

The Chassad Kukis have been giving some trouble lately, as they tried to escape supplying labour, and I did not see why they should be exempted. They have, however, now surrendered, and carried out the work allotted to them, and I think, will see that we are not afraid of the clan as the late Durbar was. If these Kukis wish for independence, they have only to cross the frontier and locate themselves in 'no-man's land', but for some reason best known to themselves, they prefer remaining in Manipur territory. They have many Tonkul slaves, and sooner or later will be

⁴⁰⁰ Alexander Mackenzie, *The North-East Frontier of India*, Delhi, 1979 reprint, first published in 1884 entitled, 'History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal', p. 151.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴⁰² E.W. Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, Delhi, 1975 reprint, (first published, Calcutta, 1886), p. 132.

compelled to release them, but for the present I will bet the tribe alone, as they have, lately carried out the orders about labour.⁴⁰³

Others pointed to the inadequate attention that the British gave to the hill tribes. Shakespeare argued that 'tribal' rebels often interpreted procrastination or forbearance of the British rulers as fear.⁴⁰⁴ For Shakespeare, the rebellion was caused by the inefficient dealing of the British with their 'tribal subjects'. The tribes were an uncontrolled lot free enough to rebel against the rulers. 'The internal cause of the trouble lay in the fact that, owing to the vastness and inaccessibility of the country which they inhabit, the Kukis in the Manipur state were out of touch with the administration and almost uncontrolled.'⁴⁰⁵ In Robert Reid's opinion, enough attention was not given to the hills. A single officer was unable to tour satisfactorily in the huge area under his control. The President of the Durbar could not make time for long tours in the hills as he was tied to Imphal.⁴⁰⁶

For William Shaw, it was the Thadou traditional beliefs in their destiny which motivates them to rebel against the British rulers. According to William Shaw, 'The Thadous believe that they are destined to be rulers of their earth and not to be submissive to anyone.' Their ambitions and belief in their destiny motivated them into 'ill considered action, a process which culminated in the Kuki rebellion of 1918-1919.' Shaw further wrote that:

... ancient thoughts and traditions carry more weight among those still only slightly affected by contact with the outer world...they still think they own the country they inhabit and regard the other tribes as their underlings, a point of view which they frequently evince to those engaged in their administration...it is slowly dawning upon them that times are changing only too rapidly.⁴⁰⁷

Further, Shaw noted that the practice of head-hunting among the Thadou Kukis was seen in the way they handled the enemies they killed. As he wrote, 'The Thadou consider themselves great head-hunters and have not given up the practice as

⁴⁰³ Tour Diary of Political Agent in Manipur for the year 1895-1896, MSA.

⁴⁰⁴ Shakespeare, 'History of the Assam Rifles', pp. 209-212.

⁴⁰⁵ Kuki Rebellion, 1920, MSA.

⁴⁰⁶ Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering On Assam: from 1883-1941*, p. 79.

⁴⁰⁷ William Shaw, 'Notes on the Thadou Kukis,' edited with introduction, notes, appendices, illustrations and index by J.H. Hutton. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal N.S.*, XXIV, 1928, p. 50.

was seen so recently as the Kuki rebellion in 1918-1919. They place great value on a head because each head means an additional slave for the soul.'⁴⁰⁸ The political officer of the Sugnu punitive column described the body of one who had been killed by Kuki rebels. The corpse of one sepoy killed was found headless, the head was removed although the arms and legs were found with the corpse.⁴⁰⁹

Agency for the rebellion was often ascribed to an outsider. In colonial understanding, the simple hill men were easily duped by people from the plains. This way of looking at the rebellion, Ajay Skaria points out, was in tune with the colonial perception of tribes as childlike, who could be easily instigated by mischief-makers, and as boisterous school-boys who created disturbances when the teacher's attention was diverted.⁴¹⁰ Kukis were thought to have lost their senses and were instigated by a Manipuri rebel against the British. As the officer in the punitive columns wrote: 'I hope still that pressure simultaneously from Burma, Manipur will bring the Kukis to their senses'.⁴¹¹ The hill tribes had rebelled under the instigation of a 'Manipuri named Chingakhamba Sana Chaoba Singh, who professes to have supernatural powers and who lived with some disciples at Kumbi near Moirang, took a prominent part in instigating the Kukis in the hills near Moirang to break into open rebellion.'⁴¹² He was a pretender to the Manipuri throne, was collecting followers from the hills but was captured within a few months of his rebellion.⁴¹³ In him, the British find the answer to their curiosity as to why the hill tribes dared to rebel. But even after his arrest, the Kuki rebels continued their uprising. In fact, the Manipuri appeared to be taking advantage of the Kuki unrest to coax the discontented Kukis to help him raid Imphal. The Kukis said that

...they had been led to make war by a Manipuri Raj Kumar of the old ruling family, who said that he was destined to be a raja and that if they would follow him and help him he would make things pleasant for him in every way possible when he came to power and that their house tax should only be Rs. one per year...the Manipuri had

⁴⁰⁸ Shaw, 'Notes on the Thadou Kukis, 1928, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁰⁹ Operation Against Kukis, 1918, Acc. No.74, R-1/S-A, MSA.

⁴¹⁰ Ajay Skaria, 'Shades of Wildness: Tribe, Caste and Gender in Western India,' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.56, No.3 (Aug.1997), p. 739.

⁴¹¹ Telegram dated 18/1/1918, Progress of Events in Manipur in Connection With the Kuki Disturbances- 1919, Acc. No. 191, R-1/S-C, MSA.

⁴¹² Administration Report of the Manipur State, 1917-1918, Acc. No. 39, R-N-2/S-A, MSA.

⁴¹³ Jyotirmoy Roy, *History of Manipur*, Calcutta, 1958, p. 151.

told them that all the sahibs had gone to fight the Germans and that there were very few troops left in Imphal.⁴¹⁴

The traditional world of the hill people where the weaker villages seek the protection of the stronger villages against raids and warfare was abruptly disrupted due to colonial intervention, as they could now go to the British for protection by paying a nominal hill house tax. The colonial state not only ensured the protection of its vassal villages but also reduced the raiding villages to poverty through punitive measures like payment of compensation and imposition of heavy fines. An interruption into their way of existence was not easily approved. The hill tribes showed their disapproval more openly in what came to be known as the Kuki rebellion of 1917-1918. Grievances of the hill people were apparent in the actions of the Kuki rebels. As their power waned in the face of a mighty British state, the Kukis attacked symbols of colonial presence and Government servants.

Significantly, Kuki protests against colonial rule commenced much earlier than 1917. Delay or refusal to pay the 'hill house tax' being one mode of resistance against colonial authority. As clearly noted in 1891-1892, the Political Agent noted that "Several Kuki villages in other parts of the district are also holding back with a view to escape taxation under our rule".⁴¹⁵ Also, in 1894 a Kuki chief paid up his tax due to be paid in 1891.⁴¹⁶ In such cases, the erring village would be visited by the Political Agent with large armed escorts and coerce them into paying. Migration to an unadministered tract between Manipur state and Burma was another way the Kukis tried to escape 'the trammels of law and order'. Kukis migrated from Manipur taking their own guns with them and settled in the unadministered tract.⁴¹⁷

Forms of tribal protest against colonial rule changes from passive mode of resistance like migration or non-payment of tax into active resistance and 'uncompromising confrontation' and rejection of British legitimacy to make rules for them as tribal disenchantment about colonial authority sets in due to violation of

⁴¹⁴ Webster's letters No. 81 dated 3/1/1918, MSA.

⁴¹⁵ Administration Report of the Manipur Political Agent, 1891-1892, MSA.

⁴¹⁶ Administration Report of the Manipur Political Agency, 1894, MSA.

⁴¹⁷ Proposed Expedition Against Chassad Kukis in the Somra Tract for a raid committed on the village of Konkailon khunow lying in un-administered territory between Burma and Manipur, Foreign and Political Department External – B Proceedings, November 1914, Nos. 156-162. NAI.

initial peaceful agreement between tribes and the state.⁴¹⁸ The Kukis had assisted the British in their fight against Manipur also against Cachar, Khonoma, and other tribes such as the Lushais and Abors.⁴¹⁹ Based on this alliance the Kukis questioned the right of the colonial state to force them against their will.

Thus, the Kukis in 1917 vowed to make 'war to the end' against the British Sirkar and proclaimed "if they won, the Sirkar would become dust, if the Sirkar won, then they must become dust."⁴²⁰ They tried to reassert their freedom and authority by resorting to the practice of raiding and the demand for revenue and coolies on villages loyal to the British. The Kuki rebels expressed themselves through raids showing a re-enactment of the time before the coming of the British.⁴²¹

The rebels' attempt to assert their authority and alliances was clearly shown by the following actions of the rebels,

The Kuki chief of Jampi in Manipur has been taking cattle and gongs from weaker villages in his neighborhood and in the Naga Hills, and is said to be collecting guns. Reports have been received that Khutinthat the Kuki chief of Jampi and head of the Thado Clan of Kukis, has proclaimed himself Maharaja, and that he and his satellites are collecting revenue and guns from all villages which they can terrorize.⁴²²

By proclaiming themselves as the Raja, Kuki rebels appropriate the practices of the colonial state. Rebels tried to portray themselves as an alternative source of authority by appropriating for themselves existing symbols of authority.⁴²³ The Kukis

⁴¹⁸ Tanika Sarkar, 'Jitu Santal's Movement in Malda: A Study in Tribal Protest' in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 147-149.

⁴¹⁹ Office of the Political Agent, Special file No. 385, 1919, NAI, New Delhi, quoted in Dr. Chishti, *The Kuki Uprising in Manipur: 1917-1920*, Guwahati and Delhi, 2004, pp. 45-46.

⁴²⁰ Webster Letter dated Camp Vaselui, 5.1.18, 1918, MSA.

⁴²¹ A report on the operations against the Kuki and Chin rebels reads, "raids on friendly villages with great loss of life have been numerous, and outposts in hills cannot prevent raiding of weak villages. Local officers are persuading friendly villages to come into valley, where they can be protected in camps. Over 1000 persons are now in camp near Imphal already". See, Report of Operations in Manipur Against the Rebel Kukis and Chins, 24th June, 1918. Home Department, June 1918, Police, Part-B Proceedings, No. 251, NAI

⁴²² Webster's Letter dated 1st June, 1918, in 'Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them', NAI.

⁴²³ Leaders of tribal movement legitimized their authority and appropriate powers by linking themselves with symbols of authority or appropriating practices of the dominant class. See, Sarkar, 'Jitu Santal's Movement in Malda: A Study in Tribal Protest', p.159. Also, Sangeeta Dasgupta,

ordered villages in the hills to pay tribute although some villages refused.⁴²⁴ In addition to such imposts, the rebels forcibly carried off young men from raided villages to work as coolies.⁴²⁵

The rebel Kukis also stationed guards at some villages who were made to establish food depots for them and also restrict their movement.⁴²⁶ This again resembled colonial way of subjugating the hill people by establishing posts in areas where movement of the tribe needs to be controlled. Thus 'tribal' rebels often adopt practices of the colonial state that they resisted in order to reassert their authority. This according to Dasgupta was identified as the conflicting impulses of rebels that drew upon symbols and practices that they at the same time oppose in order to mark out their identity.⁴²⁷

SECTION IV

KUKIS, MANIPURIS AND NAGAS

As the Kuki chiefs rebelled against the British authority, they wanted all the hill people to unite in their revolt against the British rule. The affect of the rebellion in the Naga Hills showed that Nagas and Kukis alike were asked to join the rebels and were threatened if they did not do so. Three Anal villages known by the British as Kukis also joined the rebellion with their guns. "The other day a man from one of the three villages came to Kareibung another Anal village and asked that village to join saying that they all were man of one country. Kareibung refused."⁴²⁸ Coercion was an important method of the rebels when their movement lacked the support of people from their communities.⁴²⁹ The Kukis in this district remained loyal and were not

'Reordering a World: The Tana Bhagat Movement, 1914-1919' *Studies in History*, 15, 1, n.s.1999, pp. 30-32.

⁴²⁴ Webster's Letter dated 13th May, 1918, in 'Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them', NAI.

⁴²⁵ On 28th April 1918, the Kukis raided the Anal village of Khubung Khunow and some neighboring villages, carrying off able-bodied young men to work for them as coolies. See, Webster's Letter dated 5th June, 1918

⁴²⁶ Dated 4th February, 1918, Tour Diary of W.A.Cosgrave... January to March 1918, MSA.

⁴²⁷ See, Dasgupta, 'Reordering a World: The Tana Bhagat Movement, 1914-1919', p. 31.

⁴²⁸ Progress of the Operations Against Kukis, 1919, Acc, No. 74, R-1/S-A, MSA.

⁴²⁹ Dasgupta, 'Reordering a World: The Tana Bhagat Movement, 1914-1919', p. 34.

affected by the Kuki disturbances in Manipur, but in the Kacha Naga country and among some Kukis, there was much alarm at the threats of the Manipur Kukis that they would come and destroy the villages which had not participated in the process.⁴³⁰ Thus, the rebel Kukis threatened villages not out of hostility towards the Nagas, but those Nagas and Kukis who had refused to join them. One cannot ignore the participation of the Zou tribes, as well as the three Anal villages mentioned in official documents. It is stated in official documents that the Manhlun (Zous) villages, within a day's march of the northern Chin Hills border, were assisting the Haokips.⁴³¹ The influence of the rebel chiefs on other tribes was also ignored. Tribes said to be loyal to British were, at the same time, supplying rice for the rebels.⁴³²

The Kuki Rebellion was marked by violence not only towards the sahibs and those who worked for them but, but also against Manipuris, Nepalis and other hill people who were friendly to the colonial rulers. In their resistance against colonial control and domination, the Kuki rebels did not get the support of the entire hill people. Tribes grouped as Kukis, immediately adjoining the Lushai Hills border, remained loyal to the British. As reported by Webster in 1918, "the rebels are the Kukis and some of the Chins. The Nagas and the Lushais are loyal, so of course are the Maharaja and his Manipuris."⁴³³

Furthermore, some Kukis, especially the ones who worked for the government as *chaukidars* in rest houses remained loyal to the British.⁴³⁴ At the same time, we also have a Kuki interpreter of Sengmai Thana who accused his fellow Kukis with passing information to the rebels.⁴³⁵ Thus loyal tribesmen were not necessarily Nagas or non-Thadou Kukis, but people who worked for the colonial state. For instance, two

⁴³⁰ Annual Report on the Frontier Tribes of Assam for 1917-1918, FPD, October 1918, External-B Proceedings Nos. 23-28, NAI

⁴³¹ Progress of the Operations Against Kukis, 1919 Acc. No. 74, R-1/S-A, MSA.

⁴³² "a woman of Kareibung told me today that a man at her village went yesterday to take rice to the Kukis at Tuijang, Karong. He saw about 200 guns ... Ngulkhup said that he did not fear the Manipuri sepoy, who were not 'Lushais' but that he fear the Burma sepoy. He has the rifle taken at the Karong and says that he will not part with it while he lives. He ordered the Anals to go on bringing him rice, failing which he will kill them. The bodies and heads of the *Lambus* and sepoy are hung in trees near Karong where every one can see them." *Ibid.*

⁴³³ Webster's Letter dated 13th May, 1918, in 'Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations against Them', NAI.

⁴³⁴ Even *Chaukidars* from hostile villages that joined the rebels acted as informants to the Government, See, Progress of the Operations Against Kukis, 1919, MSA.

⁴³⁵ Kuki Rebellion 1917-1919, Acc. No. 229 R-1/S-D, MSA.

Kukis were arrested by a Naga and Kuki *lambus* on the charge of collecting arms for the rebels.⁴³⁶ Kuki villages who did not join the rebels were threatened by the rebels that if they were defeated by the sahibs the village will be raided and its inhabitants killed or taken away.⁴³⁷ Rebels also threatened to exterminate villages who refused to supply men to fight against the sahibs.⁴³⁸ Other friendly villages were convenient source of food supply. They were ordered to supply rice to the rebels failing which they will be killed.⁴³⁹

The Kuki rebels were also aggressive towards those loyal Nagas and Kukis whom the colonial state considered friendly. Another important aspect of the Kuki outrage was the threats and violent treatment meted out to tribes who do not want to join them in their fight against the British. The Kuki rebels expressed a strong contempt for the loyal villages and gave out threats of extermination to them. Contemptuous attitude towards groups of low status has been identified as an important feature of the subaltern's self image.⁴⁴⁰ The Kuki rebels' violence against loyal hill people and threats of extermination was therefore a rejection of the subordinate status that the colonial state has reduced them to.

Four Nepali and Manipuri villages were raided with no loss of life, and the amount looted was inconsiderable, except at a Khuga Nepali village, where over Rs. 1000 worth of property was taken and one *lambu* carried off.⁴⁴¹ In 1917, the buffalo stables of a Nepali grazier were looted and burnt by a gang of armed Kukis and Nagas said to be about one hundred in number.⁴⁴² Cosgrave reported that he saw "burnt remains of Nepalis graziers *bathans*. The Nepalis have been driven away by the Kukis as their buffaloes used to do much damage to the Kukis cotton fields."⁴⁴³ Because Nepalis disturbed the hill people this way, the Political Officers had felt the need to prohibit Nepalis to settle where they could not be properly supervised before. Rebels'

⁴³⁶ The people who arrested the two Kukis, one head clerk in the hill office, one chaprassi, and three *Lambus* were paid cash rewards by the government. *Ibid.*

⁴³⁷ Webster's letter, dated, 30.12.1917, Camp Theiyang, Bunkhushon, MSA.

⁴³⁸ Dated January 27th, Tour Diary of W.A. Cosgrave, January to March 1918, MSA.

⁴³⁹ Dated 4th February 1918, Tour Diary of W.A. Cosgrave, January to March 1918, MSA.

⁴⁴⁰ Sarkar, 'Jitu Santal's Movement in Malda: A Study in Tribal Protest', pp. 152-153.

⁴⁴¹ Webster's Letter dated 27th December 1917, in 'Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them', NAI.

⁴⁴² Webster's Letter dated 25th January 1918, in 'Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them,' NAI.

⁴⁴³ Dated March 14th 1918, Tour Diary of W.A. Cosgrave ... January to March 1918, MAS.

hatred towards Nepali graziers has its roots in this local conflict between hill inhabitants and the Nepalis. They were communities whose means of livelihood were at odds.

Kukis also raided Manipuri villages and burnt the inspection bungalows and fired into outposts established by the colonial rulers.⁴⁴⁴ Police officers, hill peons and Manipur traders were victims of the rebels.⁴⁴⁵ It was reported that “a band of Kukis had raided a Manipuri village and gone back to the hills with the heads of a Brahman and his wife.”⁴⁴⁶ Frightened Manipuri villagers of Shuganu village deserted their houses. Political Agent Cosgrave wrote to Webster:

They [frightened Manipuris] sent in messengers to implore His Highness the Maharaja to go out with more sepoy and help them. His Highness was inclined to go out without an escort to Shuganu and to meet the Kukis whom he thought he could bring to reason, but Colonel Shakespeare and Row agreed ... it would be unwise for His Highness to go out in this way without an escort to meet the Kukis as the latter might seize the Maharaja as a hostage ... from all I know His Highness has not very much influence with the Kukis ... as the Kukis have fired treacherously on both Higgins and myself the time has passed for peaceful negotiation.⁴⁴⁷

Thus highly notable is the hostility shown towards Manipuris and Nepali graziers who could be identified as ‘outsiders’ for the hill inhabitants.

Active collaboration of the Manipuris with the British was clearly marked out in the rebellion. J.C. Higgins wrote, “the Manipuri villages all along the road both yesterday and today, turned out in force to wish us luck placing in the road the plantain tree, sugar cane, rice and water usually reserved for the passage of His Highness the Maharaja.”⁴⁴⁸ On one occasion, the Maharaja, along with the President of the Durbar, Sir Robert Henderson, accompanied the expedition.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁴ Webster’s Letter dated 3rd May 1918, NAI.

⁴⁴⁵ Telegram dated 4th February, 1918 from the Chief Commissioner of Assam to the Secretary to the Government of India in ‘Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them’, NAI.

⁴⁴⁶ Webster’s Letter dated 13th May, 1918, NAI.

⁴⁴⁷ Letter from W.A. Cosgrave to J.E. Webster dated 14th January, 1918, MSA.

⁴⁴⁸ Dated 23rd January 1918, Tour Diary of J.C. Higgins, for January – February 1918, MSA.

⁴⁴⁹ The Kuki rebellion, 1920, MSA.

The Kukis, being in touch with some sections of the Manipuris, were supported by certain villages of Lois (degraded Manipuris). They were known to have contributed rice and rice-beer to the Kukis. The British were aware that some Kukis in the Naga Hills had been 'acting in concert with their brethren in Manipur' and they were surprised to know that the Kukis had approached the Nagas in order to stir them up and asked them to join the resistance.⁴⁵⁰ Rebels attempt to collaborate with the Nagas astounded the British as they perceived Nagas and Kukis as essentially hostile to each other. Hostility amongst hill people was translated by the British as hostility between Nagas and Kukis.

In looking at the rebellion as an illustration of a hostility between the Nagas and Kukis, the colonial rulers' perception about the hill tribes persisted. One cannot deny the use of Naga coolies in the operations against the rebels; neither can we ignore the number of raids performed by the rebel Kukis on 'Naga' villages. The reason why Naga coolies were engaged in the punitive expeditions was not due to their hostility toward the Kukis but because they were the available labour recruits as shown in an annual report on the frontier tribes of Assam.⁴⁵¹ Moreover, as an officer commented, the Kukis were less likely to fire on the Nagas than on a party of sepoys during expeditions.⁴⁵² Remarkably, coolies who accompanied punitive columns often resorted to desertion. An officer reported that thirteen coolies had deserted the sepoys during a night-halt, and it would be difficult to proceed if more coolies deserted. As a result, coolies were threatened with all kind of penalties. *Lambus* and interpreters were ordered to ensure that coolies did not bolt.⁴⁵³ Moreover, it is important to note that as the Kukis were rebelling against the colonial rulers the sahibs and all who collaborated with the enemy, were naturally targets for the rebels.

⁴⁵⁰ Webster's Letter dated 15th December, 1917, in 'Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them', NAI.

⁴⁵¹ It was reported that in the Naga Hills a labour draft ready to be dispatch to France was sent to Manipur instead for operations against the Kuki rebels. They were not sent to France because they were required to volunteer for an indefinite period which they refused. Annual Report on the Frontier Tribes of Assam for 1917-1918, Foreign and Political Department, External-B Proceedings, October 1918, Nos. 23-28, NAI.

⁴⁵² Webster Letter dated 5-1-1918, MSA.

⁴⁵³ Webster letter dated 1.1.1918, Camp Tuilak Stream, 1918, MSA.

Hostility within the hills was not always clearly drawn between the Nagas and Kukis. Before the coming of the British, there are instances to show that some tribes of Kukis and Nagas were allies who protected each other against stronger tribes.

Sombram, which is the Manipuri form of the Naga Sonparam, or Sonpa's land, is a Kabui village, with a Thado village, Khochal, within a few hundred yards of it. This is a not uncommon practice in this part of the Manipur Hills, as in the old days many of the Kabui and Kacha Naga villages enlisted a garrison of Kuki houses, to protect them against Angami raids. The Angamis, before and even after the Kukis migrated into this area, exercised a loose suzerainty over the Kacha Naga villages, in spite of the nominal subjection of the latter to Manipur. The Kacha Nagas paid tribute to the overlord village, Khonoma. Traces of this suzerainty still exist, and tribute is occasionally demanded and paid, as a kind of insurance premium against the possible disappearance of the Sarkar.⁴⁵⁴

Kuki Rebellion reports received from the Cachar Road show that in an attempt to collaborate with the Nagas, a Kuki chief was sending round a sword to all the Kabui Naga villages with orders to collect at Kaupum, a big village on that road.⁴⁵⁵ Some months before this report was received, the Kaupum villagers had asked for a police guard for protection against the rebels who had threatened to destroy their village because "they worked for the Government"⁴⁵⁶. Their request was not met due to insufficient police guards.⁴⁵⁷ Villages that had supplied recruits to the Labour Corps as well as those that were supplying coolies to the state were intimidated by the rebels.⁴⁵⁸ Higgins identified a dozen Kabui Naga villages that refused to supply coolies for France. He said that they were frightened of the Kukis, "who have always lived among them and commanded all their actions."⁴⁵⁹

Elements of domination amongst hill communities and repulsion of the subjugated sections of the hill people against dominance turned out to be an

⁴⁵⁴ Tour Diary of J.C. Higgins, November 1924, MSA.

⁴⁵⁵ Rebellion of the Kuki tribes in Manipur and in the Upper Chindwin's District in Burma and of the Chins in the Southern Chin Hills: Reports on the Operations against Them, Foreign and Political Department, Secret-External Proceedings, July 1918, Nos. 7-131, NAI.

⁴⁵⁶ Kaupum was a roadside village and the villagers generally work for the state by repairing the road under a State Engineer.

⁴⁵⁷ Letter from W.A. Cosgrave to J.E. Webster dated 14th January, 1918, MSA.

⁴⁵⁸ Tour Diary of W.A. Cosgrave, January to March 1918, MSA; Letter from W.A. Cosgrave to Webster dated 14th January 1918, MSA.

⁴⁵⁹ Dated 10th October 1917, Tour Diary of J.C. Higgins, for October, 1917, MSA.

impediment for cohesion. Since dominated sections of the hill people found protection under colonial rule, there was no solidarity amongst hill people in their opposition against colonial control. What splits apart a cohesive community against a common oppressor is conflict within the society itself.⁴⁶⁰ Resistance to a domination of the stronger tribes which existed within the hills splits the hill-tribes apart and prevented a united fight against colonial oppression on the one hand. On the other hand, loyalty of other villages to the colonial state was ambiguous and solidarity was not entirely absent. This shows that the hill people shared a general opposition against alien and oppressive colonial rule. The friendly tribes of both Nagas and Kukis displayed resentment to the attitudes of domineering tribes within the hills. Thus the hill people were not united in their rebellion against domination from outside the hills. This signifies that, the general perception about the notion of equality as predominant in tribal polity no longer stands strong, as suggested by Sarkar in her study of Jitu Santal's movement.⁴⁶¹

SECTION V

SUPPRESSION OF THE REBELLION

As rulers, the British were keen to enforce their laws. Adhering to their paternalistic view point, the British punished disobedient villagers through fines and punitive expeditions.⁴⁶² Resistance to labour recruitment, for example, was followed by violent punishment. T.C. Hodson, an officer on tour, thus shot a Kuki who was trying to run away in 1901.⁴⁶³ Hodson's explanation for shooting the Kuki was that he had fired the gun in the air to frighten the man as he had not listened to Hodson's orders. As he wrote:

I know very well the uncertain temper of these people. If I had really shot the man, I believe I should have been attacked, and that they would have reported the matter to you ... the only excuse I can offer for frightening the man in this way is that I was

⁴⁶⁰ Dasgupta, 'Reordering a World: The Tana Bhagat Movement, 1914-1919', p. 17.

⁴⁶¹ Sarkar, 'Jitu Santal's Movement in Malda: A Study in Tribal Protest', p. 158.

⁴⁶² Peter Van Ham and Jamie Saul, *Expedition Naga: Diaries from the Hills in North-East India 1921-1937*. 2002-2006, Antique Collectors' Easthampton, 2008.

⁴⁶³ Manipur Secretariat, Cabin 24, Call. No. 25 XXV, Maxwell Reports 1901.

without an escort and feared the man intended to run away and set the others off too. If I thought I had really caused the man any injury, I should have done everything I could to procure him medical aid, but I was told that he was only shaken by his fall.⁴⁶⁴

Ordered by the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Maxwell, the Political Agent of Manipur, made personal inquiries into the case and found that the man had seven shot marks on his left arm, thirteen on his back and four on his neck. None of the shots had penetrated much below the skin. When asked for an explanation, Hodson said that he was 'in a difficult position as he was among people not visited by a European Officer for some time without an escort. The man, as Hodson goes on to say, was "bolting. He refused to stop, though called on several times to do so. My coolies were already short: I feared that if one man ran off, others would follow, and I should be left stranded."⁴⁶⁵ Maxwell defended Hodson and said that Hodson's aim was "to get away from the village as soon as possible for fear the Kukis who are the most savage and uncivilized of our hill tribes should attack him."⁴⁶⁶ Violent acts of the colonial officials were thus justified on the grounds of the 'uncertain temper' of the 'savage' and 'uncivilized' Kukis.

In an official report about the uprising and how to deal with it, a British officer clearly stated that they were dealing with 'uncivilized' and 'ignorant' tribes who needed to be taught the 'legitimate' authority of the state through punishment.

It is essential to the administration of a country peopled with uncivilized tribes that they shall be made to understand that legitimate orders cannot be disobeyed with impunity and that defiance brings certain punishment ... the chief commissioner realizes that these ignorant people have been influenced by entirely false notions of the dangers to which the recruits were being called upon ... he would not countenance more than the minimum punishment requisite for the assertion of the authority of the state.⁴⁶⁷

An interesting account about the plans and efforts of the colonial rulers to suppress the rebellion reveals the British policy to subdue 'ignorant tribes', 'savages' and head hunters by intimidation. On this occasion, the colonial rulers believed that

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ Webster's Letter dated 7th November 1917, MSA.

modern aircrafts would intimidate the rebels. The colonial officials expressed their desire to use the most effective means for the subjugation of the 'insurgent tribes'. The officers of the punitive columns contemplated the use of aeroplanes, contending that 'moral effect of punishment from the air would be of inestimable value.'⁴⁶⁸ The Deputy Inspector-General of Military Police, Burma, wrote in April 1918 that when the punitive expeditions were in progress, every means of power should be used "to impress these tribesmen with the futility of going on with this struggle". This could best be achieved by "sapping their morale."⁴⁶⁹ Thus, the aim of the British was to enlighten the ignorant minds of the hill people about the strength of the British in this irrational fight that the 'savages' had put up against them. The officer added that in "fighting the savages", ordinary methods were slow and expensive against the rebels' "intimate knowledge of and wonderful method in getting about their jungles". Aeroplanes were therefore considered a rapid method to "cow these savages and terrify them into subjection".⁴⁷⁰ In this rather interesting debate, the General Officer commanding the Burma Division of punitive columns conveyed a different point: the aircraft used in the North West Frontier had produced very little moral effect. He further testified that the use of the captive balloon in the Zulu war where he had served had only caused curiosity among the 'pure savages'. "My impression", he stated "is that savages are so accustomed to Europeans using incomprehensible things that they are prepared to accept anything we use without surprise."⁴⁷¹

Colonial administrators were greatly troubled when 'uncivilized' and ignorant people gave 'unprecedented' resistance against their domination and control.⁴⁷² A British officer expressed the need to punish the Kukis: "The insolence of the Kuki and his lack of regard for authority is due to the fact that he has never been taught the lesson of disobedience, either by the Manipur Raj or the imperial Government. These hill tribes do not become tractable citizens until they have experienced the heavy hand

⁴⁶⁸ Note by Lieutenant J.L.W. French-Mullen C.I.E, I.A, Deputy Inspector-General of Military Police Burma. Foreign and Political Department External-B Proceedings August 1918, Nos.13, NAI.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷¹ Letter No.9000-10-Int., dated the 13th April 1918, From The General Officer Commanding, Burma Division to The Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma, Foreign and Political Department External-B Proceedings August 1918, Nos. 13, NAI.

⁴⁷² Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, p. 188.

of the paramount.”⁴⁷³ The main object for operations against the Kuki rebels was therefore ‘to break the spirit of the Kukis’ so that they become ‘completely weary’ and ‘demoralized’ and were ready to surrender themselves, their guns and their property. The commanding officer was determined to ‘overrun’ and ‘effectively occupy’ the entire rebel country and penetrate every corner by constructing roads. He further declared that only “actual demonstration will ... prove to the Kukis our mastery and that resistance is futile.”⁴⁷⁴

The political officers are well aware of the fact that “there is serious risk of the trouble spreading and resulting in the rapid development of a state of lawlessness and anarchy which will reduce the Manipur Hills to the condition of unadministered territory.”⁴⁷⁵ Political consciousness of the tribals and their active role in the assertion of their power and freedom was read as a threat to ‘law and order’ by the colonial officials.⁴⁷⁶ Hence the need and urgency felt by the punitive troops “to make a clean job of this hateful Civil War.” The state officials were anxious about the military and political implications of the rebellion. As the Chief Commissioner of Assam expressed, “Apart from the military aspect of the case, I am naturally anxious about the political aspect. We must recover the confidence and affection of those misguided savages.”⁴⁷⁷

In order to restore the authority of the Manipur state over the tribe under its control The Political Agent will be authorized to summon the chiefs to come in to Imphal where the President of the Durbar will decide what punishment will be inflicted on them and their villages for their organized resistance to the demands of the state. The punishment will be such as is found necessary for the assertion and restoration of the authority of the state and will be inflicted not for refusal to contribute coolies but for disregard of summonses to come in to headquarters and for having prevented others from supplying coolies and inciting them to defy the orders.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷³ Webster Letters dated 1.1.1918, in ‘Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them’, NAI.

⁴⁷⁴ ‘Plan of Operations against the Kuki rebels’, Foreign and Political Department External –B Branch August 1919 No. 94-161, NAI.

⁴⁷⁵ Webster’s Letter dated 3rd December, 1917, in ‘Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them’, NAI.

⁴⁷⁶ Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, p. 182.

⁴⁷⁷ Letter from Chief Commissioner, Assam to the Viceroy, Dated 13th May, 1918, in ‘Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them’, NAI.

⁴⁷⁸ Webster’s Letter dated 3rd December, 1917, in ‘Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them’, NAI.

The British officials were concerned with protecting the Manipur valley and the friendly villages in the hills, and in the process, enacting a paternal role as the protector of the weak.⁴⁷⁹ The colonial officials seized the opportunity to show the efficiency of colonial rule in its assistance to the Manipuri Raja.⁴⁸⁰ Colonel Shakespeare visited Manipur to look into the scheme of operations and offered advice on the basis of his unrivalled knowledge of expeditions in the hills.⁴⁸¹

In the early stage of the rebellion, the British took precautions to prevent any raid in the Manipur valley.⁴⁸² Establishment of guard posts was an important measure to protect raided or threatened villages as well as limit the movements of rebel Kukis.⁴⁸³ Posts were established at different areas in order to confine Kukis of a certain area and prevent their combination with other rebel Kukis.⁴⁸⁴ Camps were also set up for the inhabitants of villages targeted by the raiding Kukis.⁴⁸⁵ The unrest caused by the rebel Kukis showed that they were “far from being reduced to submission and probably it will be necessary to maintain throughout the year a number of strong outposts to stop raiding in the Manipur valley and North Cachar Hills, and to give such protection as is possible to friendly Naga and Kuki villages.”⁴⁸⁶

What is notable is the reluctance shown by the so-called ‘friendlies’ to move into concentration camps set up by the state despite their fear. Webster wrote in June 1918:

It is clear, however, that outposts in the hills cannot prevent weak villages from being raided, and the local officers are endeavouring to persuade the people of the

⁴⁷⁹ Webster’s Letter dated 5th June 1918, *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ Progress of the Operations Against Kukis, 1919 Acc. No. 74, R-1/S-A, MSA.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸² Webster’s Letter dated 7th November 1917, in ‘Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them’, NAI.

⁴⁸³ By 1918, there are already in Manipur eight outposts held by the Assam Rifles, and one held by Burma Military Police, and in addition His Highness the Maharaja has placed guards of the Manipur state police at three places in the Manipur valley with the command not to confine themselves to the stockades, and actively tour and watch the neighbourhood of the stockades.

⁴⁸⁴ Resolution by the Assam Administration on the disturbances amongst the Kukis of Manipur and Burma, Foreign and Political Department, Secret – External Proceedings, November 1920, Nos. 105-107, NAI.

⁴⁸⁵ Letter from Mr. J.E Webster, Chief Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam to The Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, dated 2nd August 1918. Home Department, August, 1918, Part B Proceedings, No. 145, NAI.

⁴⁸⁶ Webster’s Letter dated 3rd May 1918, in ‘Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them’, NAI.

friendly villages in the hills to come into the valley where they can be placed in concentration camps and protected. At first the friendlies were unwilling to leave their villages, but the terror of the Kukis has now induced many to consent and over 1000 are now in the concentration camp near Imphal.⁴⁸⁷

Further, many of the loyal tribes served as important source of supplies for the rebels and when the British decided to put all friendly villages in camps, there are many who refused. Shakespeare stated that the so-called friendly villages “gave succour and information to the rebels.”⁴⁸⁸ This, one can say, is the resistance of the dominated sections of the hill tribes against authority.

The pursuit of the ‘primitive’ rebels during the rebellion was thus not always easy and successful. The officer commanding the Kuki Punitive measures observed: “The enemies to be dealt with were, in their own way and manner of fighting, by no means lacking in courage.” The Kukis, officers pointed out, excelled the art of lying concealed and laying ambushes. By moving on a daily basis, they evaded capture and make their whereabouts uncertain for the pursuing sepoy. The Kuki rebels surrendered when faced with hunger and exhaustion. Remorselessly pursued by sepoy, some were killed or captured while many men, including women and children, came into various posts and surrendered. One of the leading rebel chief who “eluded all attempts at capture” slipped through “the cordon formed round him” and gave himself up with his wife and child significantly at Imphal, the headquarter of the British.⁴⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that the surrender of the leading chief followed that of the villagers. Deserted by many of his people who were no longer evading capture the chief surrendered.⁴⁹⁰

CONCLUSION

The Kuki disturbances marked an important feature in the establishment of British rule in Manipur and the surrounding hills. The so called Nagas and Kukis were

⁴⁸⁷ Webster’s Letter dated 5th June 1918, in ‘Rebellion of the Kuki tribes ... Operations Against Them’, NAI.

⁴⁸⁸ Shakespeare, ‘*History of the Assam Rifles*’, pp. 230-231.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁰ Sarkar, ‘Jitu Santal’s Movement in Malda: A Study in Tribal Protest’, p. 139.

represented by the colonial rulers as inherently hostile to each other, indulging in merciless killings of one another. Inter-village raids among the hill people was characterized and reproduced into hostility between two ethnic groups that had its roots in the past. The colonial rulers, by becoming the protector of weaker villages, the propagator of peace and order amongst these hill people, and as the authority that brought the stronger villages to subjugation, established a strong regime in Manipur and the surrounding Hills. The hostility amongst the hill people was never an enmity between two neatly separated groups of Nagas and Kukis. Communities that had co-existed as a hill people now emerged as hostile who had apparently inherited a history of antagonism. British intervention, therefore transformed inter-village feuds into ethnic conflict between hill people who were now grouped as the Nagas and the Kukis.

A study of the Kuki rebellion and actions of the Kuki rebels suggested that the hill tribes rose to renounce British sovereignty in the hills. The rulers, and their collaborators, were counted as enemies to be resisted. When the call for a united resistance against the colonial rulers was not successful, the hill people, loyal to the British state, were perceived as the enemy. Hence, there were a number of atrocities committed against fellow hill men. This can also be explained as the attempt of the rebels to reclaim their hitherto existing freedom, authority and alliances which were gradually breaking down with the intervention of the British into their world.

Tribal movements, according to the Subaltern Studies approach, have been broadly seen as self assertion and aspiration for power of a marginalized and subjugated community, or of the marginalized section within a community.⁴⁹¹ In such analysis, the tribals are seen as an already subordinate group of people who aspired for change. The Kuki rebellion can also be seen as tribal resistance against domination. But its uniqueness, I argue, lies in the fact that it was a protest of the dominant sections of tribal society against domination and control from outside. The movement was not rejection of a subordinate identity but an attempt to uphold their superior identity against a force that was relegating their status. At another level, the dominated sections within the community found themselves in a position where they could oppose domination from within and without by showing their half hearted

⁴⁹¹ See, Dasgupta, 'Reordering a World: The Tana Bhagat Movement, 1914-1919'; Sarkar, 'Jitu Santal's Movement in Malda: A Study in Tribal Protest'.

loyalty to the colonial rulers, even as they were forced to join the rebellion by the Kuki rebels. The Kuki rebellion was therefore an attempt by the 'tribal' chiefs and their people to express their superior identity against subordination, and an opportunity for the dominated sections of the hill tribes to resist domination from within and without, although in a very limited way.

CONCLUSION

This study is about the colonial construction of categories. While 'Naga' and 'Kuki' are pre-colonial terms, it was during the British rule that the boundaries between these communities became rigidified as they came to be categorized as hill peoples, who were different from the Manipuris or the 'people of the plains'. In missionary representations of hill people, the terms Naga and Kuki became more entrenched in the identification of the hill-tribes. The missionaries differed from colonial administrators in their perception about the tribes and their modes of interaction. Yet, both were involved in a common project of classification. Rather than looking at differences between hill tribes, they sought to promote dominant dialects as a 'language' for conversion purposes, and thus contributed to the construction of categories. Accordingly, resistance against colonial rule by hill tribes, which reached its zenith in the Kuki Rebellion, was seen as an indication of the conflict between Nagas and Kukis. Inter-village hostility and alliances were translated as hostility between Nagas and Kukis. This understanding has persisted even today in some studies of the Kuki Rebellion.

Naga and Kuki identity now has a firm hold in the identity of hill-tribes, though the boundaries of these communities continue to shift. The Naga-Kuki conflict in the recent past was the dreadful face of ethnic conflict that arose amongst people who had been categorized as two distinct and antagonistic groups. Can this rigid and antagonistic identification of hill people into Nagas and Kukis, that has had serious repercussions often leading to bloodshed, be unraveled by probing its roots in the colonial period? This study is but a small step taken to address the problem of ethnic violence that looms large among the hill people, and which has been known to the rest of mainstream India as a rivalry between Nagas and Kukis. As constructed categories, how should one deal with the many problems associated with Naga and Kuki identities, and the conflict that happens in the name of ethnic identity?

These are questions and issues that have not been explored in this dissertation that I would need to further explore. This dissertation has not taken into account indigenous responses to such categories created by the colonial state, or how

indigenous responses to colonial categories were accommodated by the colonial state in the process of structuring and restructuring the idea of the 'tribe'. Furthermore, there are differences that existed across different regions, which I have not been taken up in this dissertation. These questions remain before me to be explored in the future.

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GLOSSARY

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|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Chaprassi</i> | peon |
| <i>Chirap</i> | native court of five members in the valley |
| <i>Chaukidars</i> | caretaker |
| <i>Dakwallas</i> | postman |
| <i>Darbar</i> | court |
| <i>Dhan</i> | paddy |
| <i>Dao</i> | knife |
| <i>Gaal /Gal</i> | war |
| <i>Haow/haou</i> | 'simple hill-people', derogatory term used by valley people |
| <i>Jhum/jhoom</i> | shifting cultivation |
| <i>Khul-lakpa /Khool-lakpa</i> | Village Chief |
| <i>Lup-lakpa</i> | Village elder |
| <i>Lambu/ Lampu</i> | hill peon |
| <i>Lhangsam</i> | Thadou word for herald |
| <i>Pagri</i> | head covering or head dress |
| <i>Panji</i> | traps |
| <i>Parwanas</i> | written orders or notices sent to hill villages |
| <i>Pundit</i> | learned men amongst the Meiteis of Manipur Valley |
| <i>Sahib</i> | Britishers |
| <i>Sarkar/Sirkar</i> | government |
| <i>Sipahis</i> | soldiers |
| <i>Thana</i> | police station |
| <i>Zu</i> | Rice-Beer |