

CHAPTER VII
ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY

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Introduction

Christian missionaries can be said to be accountable as one of the various agents for the changes in the tribal society. Until the emergence of the Christian missionaries most of the tribals can be said to have been in isolation, out of reach in their habitat, ruled by the chief of the village, uninfluenced by the modern political environment. Christianity has left no tribes untouched with its influence. As was the case of the Kuki tribes of Manipur.

VII.1. Emergence of Christianity in India, the North-East States and In Manipur

It is historically evident that any race or people, whose culture remained intact with an established system of philosophy and religion, strongly resisted foreign religions and never adopted them. Christianity won allegiance of minorities in the regions of high civilizations like Persia, India, China and Japan. Two types of people were won in India, one tribal people whose sense of brotherhood and equality, and also the lack of resistance gave the right environment for Christianity to take its root; another many Brahmins, especially in the South, who had either developed strong conviction in Christian doctrine or tasted the progressive nature of the western civilization (Sema 1980: 72).

VII. 1. a. Emergence of Christianity in India

Christianity in India is as old as Christianity itself. However, the story of the birth and growth of Christianity in India is profoundly interesting. There are two views among scholars about the origin of Christianity in India. According to one, the foundations of the church in India were laid by St. Thomas, the Apostle, or even by two Apostles, St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew (Perumalil 1971:16).

For centuries, Christians in India were confined to the narrow strip of Malabar Coast. Only after Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route to East India towards the end of the 15th century, this was to be changed. In extending its power, it was the concern of the Crown of Portugal to introduce the Christian faith everywhere. Their possession in India was no exception. In 1000 A.D., the first Franciscan Missionaries followed the Portugese ships to India. Soon they were joined by the Dominicans and others. The name of Francis Xavier-Basque, a nobleman and Papal Nuncio, landed in Goa on May 6, 1492. The development of Christianity was so good that in 1533, Pope Clement VII was able to erect the Diocese of Goa on the West Coast of India. 25 years later, it was elevated to the status of an Archdiocese with the dioceses of Cochin and Malacca as suffragana. To these Cranganore and Mylapore were added later (CBCI 1980:241-242).

An interesting experiment in Indianising Christianity was made by the Italian Jesuit Robert de Nobili, who founded the Madura Mission. Seeing that conversion by the Portugese were contemptuously looked down in India, he wore a sacred thread, put on the robe of the Indian Sanyasin, practiced vegetarianism and ablutions, appeared in the sacred city of Madura as a 'Roman Brahmin', and propounded a fifth Veda in which the tenets of Christianity were presented in language similar to the Hindus. He maintained that caste was a social convenience permissible to Christians too. His congregations of 'high caste Christians' considered the Portugese and their converts low. The accommodations theory' of de Nobili led to a heated controversy in ecclesiastical circles in India and Portugal, but the congregation was all but destroyed in the devastating wars caused by the expansion of Mysore under Hyder and Tipu (Thomas 1969:17).

The first Christians in India, according to tradition and legend, were converted by Saint Thomas the Apostle, who arrived on the Malabar Coast of India in

A.D. 52. After evangelizing and performing miracles in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, he is believed to have been martyred in Madras and buried on the site of San Thomé Cathedral. Members of the Syro-Malabar Church, an eastern rite of the Roman Catholic Church, adopted the Syriac liturgy dating from fourth century Antioch. They practiced what is also known as the Malabar rite until the arrival of the Portuguese in the late fifteenth century. Soon thereafter, the Portuguese attempted to Latinize the Malabar rite, an action which, by the mid-sixteenth century, led to charges of heresy against the Syro-Malabar Church and a lengthy round of political machinations. By the middle of the next century, a schism occurred when the adherents of the Malankar rite (or Syro-Malankara Church) broke away from the Syro-Malabar Church. Fragmentation continued within the Syro-Malabar Church up through the early twentieth century when a large contingent left to join the Nestorian Church, which had had its own roots in India since the sixth or seventh century. By 1887, however, the leaders of the Syro-Malabar Church had reconciled with Rome, which formally recognized the legitimacy of the Malabar rite. The Syro-Malankara Church was reconciled with Rome in 1930 and, while retaining the Syriac liturgy, adopted the Malayalam language instead of the ancient Syriac language¹.

Throughout this period, foreign missionaries made numerous converts to Christianity. Early Roman Catholic missionaries, particularly the Portuguese, led by the Jesuit Saint Francis Xavier (1506-52), expanded from their bases on the west coast making many converts, especially among lower castes and outcastes. Beginning in the eighteenth century, Protestant missionaries began to work throughout India, leading to the growth of Christian communities of many varieties. The total number of Christians in India according to the 2001 census was practiced by 24,080,016 or 2.3% of the total population. About 13.8 million of these Christians were Roman Catholics, including 300,000 members of the Syro-Malankara Church. The remainder of Roman Catholics was under the Catholic

Bishops' Conference of India. In January 1993, after centuries of self-government, the 3.5-million-strong Latin-rite Syro-Malabar Church was raised to archepiscopate status as part of the Roman Catholic Church. In total, there were nineteen archbishops, 103 bishops, and about 15,000 priests in India in 1995¹. The fact undoubtedly remains, that the Christian missionaries could function in the way they did in the country only because of the political domination by the British (Sema 1980:79).

All Christian churches in India have found the most fertile ground for expansion among Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups during the twentieth century; the fastest growing Christian communities have been located in the northeast, among the Khasis, Mizos, Nagas, and other hill tribes. Christianity in India offers a non-Hindu mode of acculturation during a period when the state and modern economy have been radically transforming the life-styles of the hill peoples. Missionaries have led the way in the development of written languages and literature for many tribal groups. Christian churches have provided a focus for unity among different ethnic groups and have brought with them a variety of charitable services¹.

VII. 1. b. Emergence of Christianity in North-East India

The phenomenon of mass conversion to Christianity, has taken place in most of the hill regions of North-East India since 1836. Although the British made their entry into Assam in the year 1826, as a result of the Treaty of Yandaboo with the Burmese, the East India Company assumed the responsibility of directly administering the whole of Brahmaputra Valley only after 1842. During this time, the territorial limits of India, like that of many other neighboring countries in south-East Asia, were not very well-defined. The colonial rulers, as also the English-educated native intellectuals, regarded the region beyond Kamrupa as an extension of China, and the Mongoloid people

in the hills were identified with the Shan tribes of Chinese stock. Those were the years when the English traders were desperately trying to enter China from which they were being prevented by the Chinese emperors. After the abolition of trade monopoly in India of the East India Company in 1813, the China trade and the earnings there from had assumed very great importance. The pernicious opium export to China by the foreign merchants, and the consequent drain of silver from the country made the Chinese rulers apprehensive of the designs of the East India Company. The Christian Missionaries also were suspected as the collaboration of foreign merchants (Misra 1980:83).

The American Baptists, in particular, who had been talking about establishing a mission in China for some years, were engaged in exploring the possibility and alternative routes to enter China. Meanwhile, the tea plant was discovered (1823-1832) by C. A. Bruce in the areas around Sadiya, while in a trading mission, from the possession of the Khamptis and Singphos, who were regarded as close kinsmen of the Shan of Upper Burma. Bruce had persuaded, in 1834, captain Jenkins, the commissioner, and the company officials, in Calcutta to invite the commissioner to Sadiya to work among the India Shans. In response to this, the Home Board of the American Baptists deputed their young missionaries in Burma. On their arrival here the missionaries set up their camp at Sadiya where Bruce was looking after his experimental garden. In 1837, another missionary, Miles Bronson, arrived to work among the Singphos. The Sadiya centre was abandoned after the Khampti attack on the garrison there in 1839 and Brown moved down to Jaipur. Here, Brown managed to befriend a Nocte Naga Chief of Namsang village in present day Tirap district of Arunachal. They brought the centre in Namsang but the project was given up in 1841. In the same year Brown and Barker, another missionary shifted to Sibsagar while Bronson moved down to Nowgong in 1841. In 1843, Barker went to Gauhati and for the next twenty years, Sibsagar, Nowgong and Gauhati remained

the only stations of the American Baptists in North-East India. The name "Shan Mission" was withdrawn and, henceforth, "Assam Mission" became the name of the project (Elwin 1972:26). Bronson started the Orphan Institution there in 1843 with financial assistance from the local British residents, including the Commissioner. The first central mission of its kind was essentially a boarding school though local scholars could also attend its classes. The first generation of Christian converts came into being largely through these schools. By and large, the orphan of the low caste went for mission-schooling in those early years. Sometimes the orphan would be turned over to the Mission voluntarily by relatives or guardians; sometimes they would only give them up on payment of money (Misra 1980:83).

VII. I. c. Emergence of Christianity in Manipur

While the hill people were fully engrossed with their religion based on nature and supernatural, Christian Missionaries penetrated into their existing belief. During the British rule the Christian Missionaries came to India and started converting the neglected lot of the natives. And Manipur is also not an exception to this. The Christian Missionaries, as Gangte has remarked, who first entered into Manipur were Rev. William Pettigrew, an educationist and Watkin Roberts along with Dr. Peter Fraser, a medical man (1993).

The emergence of Christianity, coming of the Christian Missionaries, and the spread of Western education in Manipur can be traced back in the history of the state. Maharaja Surchand Singh (1886-1890 AD), the eldest son of Chandrakirti Maharaja ascended the throne after his father in 1886. Since his accession, Manipur had become a divided house - the ten sons of the late Maharaja by his six queens were divided into two groups, one led by Surchand Singh and the other by Tikendrajit Singh, the flamboyant and the most popular prince, who was the idol of the masses; at the age 31 he proved to be the

most capable prince. The dissensions, quarrels and mutual mistrusts and rivalry among the princes culminated in the Palace revolution of 1890; the immediate cause being the ban order by the Maharaja on the 17 year old prince Zilangamba to sit in the durbar as a result of his quarrel with Paka Sana, otherwise known as the arch enemy and rival of Jubaraj Tikendrajit, the Senapati. Zilangamba and Angousana made an attack on the palace in the night of 22 September, 1890. The weak-willed king was totally unnerved and fled to the British residency without putting up a fight.

It appeared that the king and his brothers were demoralised and greatly frightened at the revolution which they knew was engineered by Tikendrajit himself. Kulachandra, the Jubaraj, who wanted to take a neutral position for obvious reasons and went to Bishenpur in the night of attack, was recalled to Imphal and crowned the new King of Manipur. Surchandra with his brothers and his followers left Imphal for Calcutta in the pretext of going to Brindaban. He requested the British Government to restore his throne. Lord Landsdowne, the viceroy of India ordered Mr. J.W. Quinton, Governor of Assam, to recognise Kullachandra as the King but to arrest Jubaraj Tikendrajit. Accordingly, Mr. Quinton and his army raided the residence of Jubaraj without prior notice. However, Tikendrajit was not at home as his informers tip the plan off. In further attempts, Mr. Quinton, Mr. Grimwood, the political agents along with five other British officers were killed.

The British Government declared open war against Manipur. Three columns of army were sent to Imphal from three directions: 1. Tamu (Moreh) - in south-east, 2. Kohima (Nagaland) - in the north and 3. Cachar (Assam)-in the west. In this Anglo-Manipuri war, the forces from the west and north advanced to Imphal after strong fighting. But in the south at Khongjom (40 km. from Imphal) Paona Brajabashi and his army resisted repeatedly in spite of the larger and superior British Army. Paona lost his

life in the war and the British conquered Manipur on 27th April, 1891 AD. Jubaraj Tikendrajit and Thangal General were hanged by neck at 5 p.m. on 13th August, 1891 AD at Mapan Kangjei-bung (Polo ground). Manipur's independence and sovereignty which were so long preserved throughout the centuries and millenniums had now lost. But Sir James Johnstone, the political agent from 1877-1886, written five years after the war, cautioned, "Let us beware, we have not heard the last of Manipur". On Thursday 22nd of Langban (September), 1891 AD, the Political Agent in Manipur called Maharani Moirangthem Chanu and Jubaraj Churachand (8 years old) and made him the king. Maxwell was appointed the Political Agent of Manipur and Superintendent of the State. The instructions given to him (Maxwell) were that "he should exercise those powers with due regard for the customs and traditions of the Manipuris and should endeavor to interfere as little as possible with the existing institutions, in so far as they might be compatible with the peace and good order". After Churachand's formal investiture to the throne of Manipur on 29 April 1892, the young Raja was admitted to Lord Mayo's College at Ajmer, Rajasthan, for his education.

The first office of the British Political Agent in Manipur was established in 1835, long before the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891, and Lt. Gordon was appointed the first Political Agent in Manipur. The presence of a British Political Agent in Manipur, according to a treaty signed between the two sovereign countries, was to increase trade and commerce between Manipur and the British and to help each other from outside invaders - Ava in the case of Manipur and the Burmese and other Indian reactionaries against the British. During the time, Chandrakirti Singh, a minor boy, was the ruling monarch of Manipur and his uncle Nara Singh was the Regent.

Imphal, the capital (Kangla) was a centre for all literary and intellectual activities of Manipur for centuries. The Kings of Manipur were great patrons of learning

and learned men. The Pandi (Maichou) Loisang, the Department of Scholars, was the main center of the intellectual life of the Kingdom. Thus, a huge literature dealing with all branches of knowledge has now come down to the present day. The Meiteis had their own script and scriptures written in leaves and barks of trees. In the first quarter of the 18th century during Meidingu (King) Pamheiba (aka, Maharaja Garibaniwaj), the King accepted Hinduism as a Royal Religion in place of the original Meitei faith of Sanamahi and ordered the burning of all religious scriptures related to Sanamahi, which is still remembered as "Puya Meithaba". A number of Hindu Brahmins from Bengal replaced the Meitei Maichous in the Loisang and Temples, and with time, Bengali script and language were introduced in the Kingdom. More than one hundred years later, when the British took over Manipur in 1891, the King and his Assembly (darbar) was devoted Hindus, and the Meitei population had embraced Vaisnavism after decades of resistance (IAP_MHA_CTL).

The Church leaders, for spread of Christianity go to such areas where people don't follow any of the well established religions, where people are poor, illiterate and backward, where the administration has no objection to conversion. Such conditions exist in remote and backward areas where people are very poor, steeped in illiteracy and neglected by the well organized and advanced people. During the days of British rule the missionaries came to India and found ample scope of conversion among the neglected lot of the natives. They reached the remote areas and met with the cross-section of the people. They would befriend the people. They would begin their activities from starting schools, distributing free books, helping the meritorious poor students by providing free board and lodging for prosecuting their studies. The missionaries followed the same pattern of activities in the hills of Manipur as they did elsewhere (Sema 1980).

William Pettigrew, the first missionary to Manipur, was an Englishman born in Edinburg, Scotland on January 5, 1859 and was educated in Livingstone College, London. Pettigrew had indeed a broad vision. He was instrumental in bringing the various hill tribes together and his contribution towards the integration of the people of Manipur remained unparalleled. He wrote an article for the Baptist Missionary Review in 1915, entitled, "On the right hand side of the Road, YES; on the left hand side, NO". In his article Pettigrew has written that, from January 1891, when he first set foot on Indian soil, and heard two months later of the terrible massacre of seven British officers in Manipur, including the Chief Commissioner of Assam and the Political Agent of Manipur, until their return from furlong in 1915, there had been a decided NO on any attempt to branch out into the hills and valleys south-east, south-west, or north-west of the strip of country wherein the Tangkhul Naga dwells, and amongst who the missionaries were allowed to establish themselves under the A.B. Mission in the beginning of the year 1896.

Before permission to enter this native state was given in January, 1894, preparation in language study and for the experiences ahead were the orders of the day. He arrived at Imphal on February 6, 1894. That permission was given by a British Officer in charge of the State at that time, since the newly appointed Rajah, who succeeded the usurper who was executed, was but a young Hindu lad. Until then no Christian missionary had ever been allowed into the state, nothing was revealed in the annals or histories, whether written by Indians or by British officials, to show that Christianity was even as much as known. Pettigrew searched the Widener Library at Harvard, the Boston Library at Boston, the congressional Library at Washington, and the British Museum at London, to find out how William Carey got into touch with a Manipuri, or someone who had knowledge of the Manipur Language, and translated and printed at Serampore, in 1831 portions of the New Testament into Manipuri in the Deb-Nagri character. No clue of any

kind was found, and in Manipur itself no tradition or story was existence of any Christian missionary entering the State until the way was providentially opened in 1894. And this happened after three years of patient waiting almost at its doors.

The conversion of the Manipuri Hindu in the valley was their goal. Knowledge of Bengali and Manipuri, gathered while waiting outside the frontier, had prepared the way for this work but it was not to be. The Government of India recognized their responsibility of governing the State until the Hindu Rajah could come of age, hence the propagation of the Christianity among his Hindu subjects was not allowed. This refusal came six months after Pettigrew entered the State. To accept either one of two conditions was the alternative sent to them from Shillong a year and a half later: Say "Yes" to the proposal of leaving the valley alone, and establishing mission head-quarters among the head hunting Naga tribe called the Tangkhul Naga in the hills in the north-east corner of the State, bordering on Upper Burma. Say, "No" and leave the state for good. This was the ultimatum given in November, 1895. It was interesting to note that a few months before this announcement was made, one of the villages of the tribe had been raided and over 140 heads cut off and carried away. They established themselves under the A.B. Mission at Ukhrul the most central village of the tribe, in February, 1896 (IAP_MHA_CTL).

"This was the situation during those twenty years of confinement. One tribe, one language, that had to be reduced to writing and that in a dialect among many dialects in the one tribe. We were just as much confined in our work as a South Sea Island missionary was confined to one small island among many, or as a Moravian missionary in Leh, confined to some place on the border of Tibet, with restrictions all around him. During those twenty years that little word "NO" figured a good deal in our thinking. However much we sang the hymn, "Send the light, the Gospel light", we were up against a wall of opposition to prevent the spread of the Gospel outside the north-east confines.

While working in such limitations, away from our 'main folk', 45 miles distant from the capital of the valley, 134 miles from the railway and its communications, amid animistic fear and superstition, and the fight against the devil and all his works, God moved in that corner of the State in a company of believers. God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. After waiting seven years in the first converts they had a lone church and the one lone school. Still they both have served their purpose, and have been a means of bringing many outside the closed area to Christ, and with manifold service in the many Christian communities that are now scattered in all the hills surrounding the valley of Manipur" (Rev. W. Pettigrew (1915) 1996: 40-43).

They taught the tribes the meaning of self-support, self-government in church and the village affairs, and self-administration of their own funds. The word of God cannot be confined. It is the same all over the world, and especially among hill peoples of Assam and Burma. There was something in their mental make up that urges them to go forward, and in spite of barriers and persecution, even by their nearest and dearest, they preached the Gospel, suffered persecution from their village chiefs and elders, and spread the news around wherever they may go. Up to 1915 the lone church at Ukhrul among the Tangkhul Nagas reported sixty-three members, the majority of them Tangkhul Nagas. The year 1932 reports the largest number of church members among this tribe, and the largest number of organized churches (ibid: 40-43).

The progress of conversion up to 1911 was slow. The converts were mostly young men studying in the school. Afterwards larger groups started becoming Christians. Nearly half of the converts in the state were Tangkhuls alone. The rate of conversion picked up by 1921. So long the converts included individuals but groups and even whole villages came to the fold. The number of schools multiplied so did the converts. The students who came to Ukhrul accepted Christianity during their studies. When they went

back to their villages, churches were established. There were many occasions when the whole family, clan and the village accepted the new faith (Ansari 1991: 155).

And 1916 saw petitions coming from a small group of Thadou Kukis in the north-west area, another group of Kom Kukis in the Sadar area north and west of the capital and still another from the Anal Kukis in the south-east area, praying for teachers and pastors to come over and help them organize themselves into companies of believers based on the training and teaching of the parent church at Ukhurul. From 1915 onwards converts have increased year by year in a normal way; from 63 in 1915, 235 in 1916 and 335 in 1917. The year 1923-1934 brought us a revival in which over 1000 were baptized. There are Christians in over 100 villages now. Only the valley with its Hindus and Mohammedan population of over 280,000 is still closed to the missionary and his message (Rev. W. Pettigrew (1915)1996: 40-43).

The political Agent, Major Maxwell did not like him to preach the Gospel among the Meities. He was advised rather to work in the hill areas. Accordingly he moved to Ukhurul in early 1894. Pettigrew started a school at Ukhurul. The villagers were angered because of his preaching and enforcement of strict discipline. In 1901, after five years of work, 12 boys attending the school were baptized. Later on some of his students took upon themselves the task of preaching the Gospel. The first Kuki Baptist Church was established at Tuyangvaichong village in 1916. Besides people, the village chief also accepted the new faith. The Kuki chiefs exercised enormous power and if they accepted the new faith the whole village would accept the same. This paved the way for large scale conversion. Kangpokpi, a place in the Sadar hills, for its central location and easy accessibility was selected for this purpose. The missionaries set up a Middle English School, one orphanage, one leper asylum (which was the first in Manipur) and a dispensary. The Kukis formed an association of their own unit in 1943, known as the Kuki

Christian Organization to be known later as the Kuki Baptist Association (KBA), with its headquarters at Motbung. Since then, Christianity has more attracted the tribal people of Manipur than 'animism' (Ansari 1991: 155).

In 1954, the Kukis of the North East Manipur so far in association with the Tangkhuls formed a separate association of their own known as the North East Kuki Baptist Association Manipur. The Gospel of Christ reached among the Vaipheis of eastern Manipur through the Kuki and the Tangkhuls. The Kuki-Chin tribes reside in the Churachandpur district in large numbers. The two Vaiphei young men studying in Aizawl accepted Christianity on March 17, 1910 and become the first converts among the Kuki-Chin tribes of Manipur. The missionaries pushed its work of conversion with full vigor. Churches were established among the various Kuki tribes namely Paite, Vaiphei, Kuki, Hmar, Gangte, Zou, Simte, etc. many families left their household gods and embraced the new faith. They repented for their past sins. One comes across a church in almost every Christian village. Most of the major tribes have set up associations for the management of churches and associated activities. The tribes formed associations of their own because they "preferred to hear the Gospel in their own language rather than in Meitie-Lon (Manipuri language). In the associations, the majority tribes often dominate the minorities and the minorities felt they were being ignored. All the tribes had their own tribal consciousness and separate identities (Ansari 1991:156-157).

So far as Manipur is concerned, the British religious policy was very clear. They knew that the Princes of Manipur were staunch followers of Hindus and almost all in the valley had accepted Hinduism. They knew that Hinduism was the faith of the biggest section of the society of Manipur. Therefore they did not want to propagate any other religion in Manipur. The preaching of Christianity was also not allowed in the valley of Manipur. Sir James Johnstone's viewpoint was only concerned with hill Nagas and Kukis.

Christianity thus was allowed to penetrate from the hills, from Ukhrul, but indirectly it was initiated from Imphal. The American Baptist Mission, the North-East India General Mission, the Presbyterian Church, the Roman Catholic Mission, the Seventh Day Adventist, Independent Church of India are spreading Christianity among the tribal of Manipur (Sen 1992: 28).

The Kukis believed in a Supreme omnipotent God, Chungmaipa and they did not have any sacred place or idol to worship. This made easier for them to accept the Gospel. The philosophy of Christianity changed their thoughts and belief in evil spirit and sacrifices had to be stopped which helped the poor villager. All these made easier for the tribals to accept Christianity. The Meitei Christians were the traditional Meities and Hinduised people and they later on were converted to Christianity. Majority of them belong to American Baptist Mission. Some of them are also Roman Catholics.

Table VII. 1
Conversion to Different Religions

Name of the groups	Christianity		Judaism		Buddhism		Born Christian		Non-converts		Total N= 300
	n=84	%	n=5	%	n=1	%	n=121	%	n=89	%	
Kuki tribes (180)	52	28.89	4	2.22	0	0	121	67.22	3	1.67	180
Meitie (60)	15	25	0	0	1	1.67	0	0	44	73.33	60
Non-Manipuris (60)	17	28.33	1	1.67	0	0	0	0	42	70	60
Total	84	28	5	1.67	1	0.33	121	40.33	89	29.67	300

Among the one hundred and eighty Kuki, sixty Meitie and sixty non-Manipuri respondents, 96.11% Kuki, 25% Meitie and 28.33% non-Manipuris are Christian believers. Of this 96.11% Kuki Christian believer respondents 28.89% is converted Christians. 1.67% Kuki, 73.33% Meitie, 70% non-Manipuri are believers of their traditional religions. 1.67% Meitie respondents believed in Buddhism, 2.22% Kuki and 1.67% non-Manipuri respondents believed in Judaism (Table VII.1, 2).

Table VII.2

Religion followed by the groups in the three districts

Religions followed by the group	Name of districts												Total
	Churachandpur				Senapati				Chandel				
	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Christianity	84												
Kuki	9	2	0	0	21	4	0	0	6	0	7	3	52
Meitie	5	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	2	15
Non-Manipuri	9	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	17
Judaism	05												
Kuki	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	4
Meitie	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Manipuri	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Buddhism	01												
Kuki	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Meitie	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Non-Manipuri	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Born Christian	121												
Kuki	26	23	0	0	23	8	0	0	17	7	11	6	121
Meitie	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Manipuri	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-convert	89												
Kuki	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Meitie	6	4	0	0	9	10	0	0	0	0	8	7	44
Non-Manipuri	9	2	0	0	12	5	0	0	0	0	11	3	42
Total	65	35	0	0	71	29	0	0	25	7	47	2	300

VII. 2. Various Denominations of Christianity

A denomination is a religious organization that is smaller than a Church but larger than a Sect. Membership tends to be ascribed at birth and to include a relatively

narrow mix of social class backgrounds. The authority structure is formal with a trained clergy. As with larger types of religious organizations, denomination uses a highly abstract form of religious service with little emotional display (Johnson 2000: 75).

Johnson observes, "The line between ecclesia and denomination is not always clear-cut nor is the line between sect and cult denomination is what usually results when a sect becomes 'respectable' in the eyes of middle class society and relaxes its religious vigor" (1968:433-35).

A denomination thus grows out of a set and shares many similarities with the ecclesia. Socially, it is a middle class phenomenon, bound essentially by middle class-status-identity and respectability. Its membership is voluntary and relatively open but is largely defined by the class-status-consciousness. The denomination is thus the result of the Sect becoming larger in terms of members and is in fact much closer to the church than the Sect ever was. It also means a change of the various dogmas ethics and codes of the denomination (ESO-15 2004:11).

Catholicism is the branch of Christianity that proclaims its allegiance to the bishop of Rome (the Pope) as the vicar or representative of Christ on earth. Historically, the Roman Catholic Church was the Christian church in the western world from the official recognition of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire by Constantine I 313 until the protestant reformation. Roman Catholics constitute the largest single religious group in the United States. Catholicism maintains that the church is one, holy, catholic (universal), and apostolic (that is, that the pope is part of an unbroken line of succession from Peter and the first disciples of Jesus) (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 34).

The Reformation movement was initiated by Martin Luther in 1517 that led to the establishment of Protestant churches independent of Roman Catholicism. The theological origin of this movement can be located in certain doctrinal changes proposed by Luther-particularly his belief that man is justified by faith and not by good works. When Luther posted his 95 theses on a church door in Wittenberg in 1517, he had no intention of inaugurating a reformation but wanted to bring about a clarification in the church's teaching. Instead, church officials accused him of heresy. Luther did not retract his statements, and he became increasingly critical of the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church. Supported by swelling numbers of followers drawn from the ranks of both princes and peasants, churchmen and patriots, Luther held beliefs that were highly compatible with the hopes of his backers for the disintegration of the power that the rigid institutionalism of the Catholic Church had imposed upon them (ibid: 239).

Protestantism is a collective term for all the denominations, sects, and other religious groups that developed out of the Reformation. The major branches of early Protestantism were Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anabaptism, and Anglicanism. The term also refers to all the social and cultural phenomena whose existence is due primarily to the Reformation. The word is derived from the "protest" of the Lutheran representatives at the meeting of the Reichstag of Speyer in 1529. Protestantism was essentially an effort to replace the authority of the Roman Catholic Church with that of the Bible and to stress individual autonomy or the universal priesthood of all believers. It was also one phase of the political struggle that accompanied the breakdown of the Holy Roman Empire (ibid: 227).

The Protestant Reformation was a movement which emerged in the 16th century as a series of attempts to reform the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe.

Protestants generally trace their separation from the Roman Catholic Church to the 16th century, which is sometimes called the magisterial Reformation because the movement received support from the magistrates, the ruling authorities (as opposed to the radical Reformation, which had no state sponsorship)².

Most Protestant denominations are represented in India, the result of missionary activities through out the country, starting with the onset of British rule. Most denominations, however, are almost exclusively staffed by Indians, and the role of foreign missionaries is limited. The largest Protestant denomination in the country is the Church of South India, since 1947 a union of Presbyterian, Reformed, Congregational, Methodist, and Anglican congregations with approximately 2.2 million members. A similar Church of North India has 1 million members. There are 473,000 Methodists, 425,000 Baptists, and about 1.3 million Lutherans. Orthodox churches of the Malankara and Malabar rites total 2 million and 700,000 members, respectively.

Most of the tribal converts of Manipur are Protestants. The churches are self governing and have their Associations. Every three years a gathering of these associations known as Convention is organized. The Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) is the biggest church organization. The Kukis are scattered in every part of the state. They find it difficult to have a well knit organization. The Kuki Baptist Convention (KBC) adopts a kind of Presbyterian form of church administration (Ansari 1991:157).

According to the Kuki Christian believers there are different churches for different denominations. The following churches of the different denominations among the Kuki Christian as named by the respondents are-Kuki Baptist Church, Christian Revival Church, Thadou Baptist Association, Baptist, Roman Catholic Church (RCC), American Baptist Mission, Methodist Anglican, Seventh Day Adventist, Presbyterian, Revivalist Church of Christ, Salvation Army, Orthodox Evangelical, Protestants, Pentecostal

Assembly of God, Evangelical Luthern Church, Church of Christ, Vaiphei Christian Church, United Pentecostal Church (UPC), Thadou Baptist Church (TBC), Kuki Christian Church (KCC), etc.

The Evangelical Luthern Church, established in 1979. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) established a centre at Hundung, near Ukhrul. The Roman Catholic Church usually accepts in its fold those who are excommunicated by the Baptist church. It has established schools in many places. The important centres are Imphal, Churachandpur, Sugnu, Hundung, Tamemglong, etc. Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) was brought to Manipur in 1951. The Mizos who migrated from Lushei Hillls, now Mizoram, brought the Salvation Army Church (SAC) to Manipur in 1950s. then there are the Fundamental Baptist Churches, Revival Church of God (RCG), Church of Christ, the Kuki Christian Church (KCC), the New Testament Baptist Churches Association, the Vanmi Devotees and the Zionist Association, etc . (Ansari1991:159)

According to the 25 % Meitie Christian converted respondents the most common churches of denomination are the Meitie Evangelical Baptist Church, Baptist Church, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Christian Revival Church, Revivalist, Catholic, Evangelical Christian Church, Seventh Day Adventist Church, etc. While the 28.33 % non-Manipuri converted respondents, the Roman Catholic Church, Church of Christ, Seventh Day Adventist, Revival Christian Church, etc. are the common ones.

According to the 28.89 % Kukis, 25 % Meities, and 28.33 % non-Manipuri Christian believer respondents, there are no criteria to become a member of any of the denominations. Only if one has faith in Jesus and believes in His words, accept the doctrines and Jesus as one's Lord then one can be baptize and become a member of any denomination one chooses.

VII. 3. Certain Conflicts and Acceptance of Christianity

Before discussing the various conflicts and the acceptance of Christianity by Kukis in particular and Manipuris in general let us have an idea of the various religious groups inhabiting in Manipur.

i) Hinduism

Hinduism is the major religion of India. The term derives from an old Sanskrit word meaning "dweller on the Indus River". Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world. Most of its adherents are in India, although substantial numbers of Hindus are found in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Hinduism developed from Vedism, an early Aryan religion in South Asia, from Brahmanism, an elaborate priestly cult derived from Vedic religion. Hinduism is a tolerant and eclectic religion. An essential tenet of Hinduism is the doctrine of transmigration of souls and reincarnation; the specific form of incarnation of any individual is determined by his previous incarnation. Hinduism is a polytheistic religion, but all gods are regarded as merely subsidiary aspects of a single deity (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 127).

The Meities, who believed in Sanamahi, a folk deity adopted Hinduism only after 16th century. The geographical isolation of Manipur seems to be the major factor to resist the immediate religious transformation from animism to any sect of Hinduism, i.e. Shaivism or Vaishnavism. There are different stages which marked the introduction of Hinduism into Manipur. The kings of the period from 1467 to 1697 did not adopt Vaishnavism formally. Charai Rongba became king in 1697 AD. And in 1704 AD he embraced Hinduism. This was the first step towards royal adoption of religion along with their king. The king adopted a Hindu preacher as Guru. His descendants are called Guru Aribam. A full locality of these descendant Brahmins now exist at Brahmapur. The

second stage starts with the reign of Garib Niwaj (1709-1748 AD.). The reign of Garib Niwaj reflects a series of transformations between the different sects of Hinduism. The king took the sacred thread for three occasions. He initiated into Vaishnavism in 1717 AD by appointing Gopal Das as his Guru. The king popularized Bhagvat Gita in Manipur by taking the original manuscripts from Assam. During 1728 AD Santi Das, a Hindu preacher from Sylhet, arrived in Manipur and started his mission to preach Ramanandi cult of Vaishnavism. Santi Das initiated the king into his religion. This event marked the beginning of Ramamandi cult in Manipur. After the death of Garib Niwaj when King Jai Singh or Bhagya Chandra became the king, he and his subjects accepted the Chaitanya school of Vaishnavism and the king offered royal sanction to the sect⁴.

The Meites are strict Hindus of the Vaishnav sect. They eat fish but will not touch flesh and profess to be very particular in their social and religious observances. The Hinduism of Manipur has a peculiar character showing the indigenous character. The ritualistic performances are carried out by youngsters especially women. A Vaishnavite Hindu man and a woman wear 'Tilak' mark on their forehead which is pasted on the ridge of the nose just behind the nose tip, upward, right to the centre of the forehead. There are no social or religious restrictions to accept any one visiting their homes. Most of them have deep knowledge of the Guru, Mahabharata, Ramayana and the Puranas³.

ii) Islam

Islam derives in part from the Judeo-Christian tradition-Adam, Moses, and Jesus are all recognized as divinely inspired prophets- but the divinity of Christ is rejected. The sacred text of Islam is Koran. The book emphasizes the power, unity, and goodness of the one true God (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 145). The Pillars of Islam are the five essential religious duties of Muslims (as believers of Islam are called). The first is the

recitation of the Islamic creed, 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the apostle of Allah'. The second is the saying of formal prayers five times each day, preceded by ceremonial washing. The worshipper at these prayers must always face toward the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, no matter how far away that is. The third pillar is the observance of Ramadan, a month of fasting during which no food or drink may be taken during daylight. The fourth is the giving of alms. Finally there is the expectation that every believer will attempt at least once, to make a pilgrimage to Mecca (Giddens 2001: 534).

'Muslims' of Manipur were among those captured by king Khagemba at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when he repelled an invasion from the west in 1606 A.D. These Muslims were settled as a separate community in the valley, and were joined from time to time by other Muslims who came as peaceful settlers. Manipuris call the Muslims 'Pangal', which is a corrupt word of 'Bengal' (Paratt 1980). All Manipuri Muslims read Koran. The Holy book is translated in Manipuri language.

iii) Buddhism

Buddhism is a religion originating with the teachings of Buddha (Gautama, Siddharta, or Sakyamuni). Buddha (born C. 563 BC) was an Indian Prince in a small kingdom in south Nepal in the sixth century BCE, who experienced in different period of his life both sensual pleasures and physical denial but became dissatisfied with both. Eventually he attained what he felt to be enlightenment and preached it to others for 45 years. Buddha achieved his enlightenment during a time off religious decadence in India. He preached in reaction to the corrupt and moribund religion of his day. His doctrines represented a reforming impulse, although his example, like that of Jesus, was radically new. Buddha accepted the prevalent doctrine of karma, which claims that deeds of the past and the present are rewarded or punished automatically through ceaseless rebirths in the

circle of life. The aim of Buddhism, like that of all Indian religions, is to break the circle and be released from the wheel of Karma. Through the operation of Karma man need not look further than his own life situation for the clue to his enlightenment. The path of salvation lies in a life of self-discipline and meditation, separated from the tasks of the mundane world. The overall objective of Buddhism is the attainment of Nirvana, complete spiritual fulfillment (Giddens 2001:535). Buddha also set forth his own path and doctrine on the “four noble truths”: life is suffering; suffering has a cause; suffering can be overcome; the way to end suffering is to follow the eight fold path. The eight fold path consist of right speech, right action, right livelihood (morality), right mindfulness, right effort, right concentration (contemplation), right view (wisdom), and right intention (insight). In Buddhism great emphasis is placed on the transitoriness and delusive nature of phenomenal existence (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 29).

iv) Judaism

Judaism can be dated from about 1,000 BCE. The early Hebrews were nomads, living in and around ancient Egypt. Their prophets, or religious leaders, partly drew their ideas from the existing religious beliefs in the region, but differed in their commitment to a single, almighty God. Most of their neighbors were polytheistic. The Hebrews believed that God demands obedience to strict moral codes, and insisted on their claim to a monopoly of truth, seeing their beliefs as the only true religion (Zeitlin 1984, 1988). Judaism is an Abrahamic religious-faith which recognizes Abraham as a Patriarch. Circa 2000 BCE, the G-d (used to respect the Jewish prohibition against spelling the word GOD, the name or title of the deity in full.) of the ancient Israelites established a divine covenant with Abraham, making him the patriarch of many nations⁴. Judaic practices are the belief that Jewish customs and Jewish faith were compatible with indigenous tribal religion and

could in fact replace it. The link of the Kuki-Chin tribe was through a lost Israelite claim associated with millenarian beliefs, which may have been introduced to them through Christianity, alternatively, may have been inherited from their indigenous religious beliefs (Weil 2004: 220).

v) *Christianity*

At the core of biblical Christianity is belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Christianity interprets the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, especially with reference to Jesus, the messiah a Hebrew word meaning 'the anointed', the Greek term for which was 'Christ'- awaited by the Jews, whose coming, Christians believe, was foretold by the prophets (John 1:45, 4:25) (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 38). Paul, a Greek speaking Roman citizen, was a major initiator of the spread of Christianity, preaching extensively in Asia Minor and Greece. Although the Christians were at first savagely persecuted, the Emperor Constantine eventually adopted Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire (Giddens 2001:534).

Christianity holds three ecumenical creeds. The Apostles' Creed is a clear, simple confession of faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. The Nicene Creed asserts the divinity of Christ. The Athanasian Creed declares Jesus to be both God and man. The latter two creeds embody the doctrine of the Trinity, meaning that God is one divine being in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (Encyclopedia of Sociology 1974: 38).

Religious conversion implies accepting a set of beliefs and practices which is quite different from the system of truth and religious commitment previously experienced (Heirich 1977). Conversion to Christianity began after the Christian missionaries established themselves in the tribal areas in North-East India in 1894, three

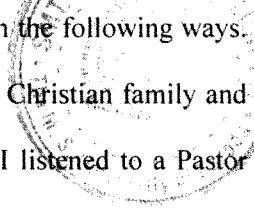
years after the British Chin-Lushai Expedition and the Anglo-Manipur War. It has characteristically been discussed in relation to Christianity, 'conversion' often being synonymous with 'conversion to Christianity' (Pauw 1975). Though, this is not exclusively so, and conversion to Islam has been documented in several contexts. However, conversion to Judaism, traditionally a non-proselytizing world religion, is a relatively unexplored field (Weil 2004:219).

Conversion is voluntary and personal confession of one's sinfulness and repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as personal lord and Savior. Real conversion means a change of religion from one faith to another with corresponding change in attitude, motivation, character and morality. The Christian attitude towards other religion in India was not one of assumed superiority but of sharing human honor and dignity. The main purpose of Christian missionaries is to present the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Conversion may or may not take place. Conversion according to the Christian understanding is an act of the individual will, moved by the spirit of God which has touched his heart. It is not something imposed on him. (Banerjee 1968: 17).

Christian preaching of the Gospel contradicted their superstition and belief in imaginary spirits. It was an infringement on their age old customs and an attack upon their religion. Christianity of course threw a challenge to the old faith. Hence the early period of conversion is marked with rivalries and conflicts between the champions of the old order and the new converts. The world of the village priest is fast shrinking around him and he stands there as a helpless spectator. The rapid revival and conversion of the tribes left unnerved the non-believers who were still clinging to their old beliefs on spirits residing in different places. They felt that the preaching of the Gospel was an encroachment on their time-honored customs and an attack upon the old religion (Ansari 1991: 155-156).

28.89% Christian converts of the Kuki respondents came in contact with Christianity and accepted it after they were preached by evangelists and missionaries in every nook and corner of the state. When evangelists came and preached the gospel that Jesus is the only Savior, where the soul would go after death, explained the changes in the ways of life of those who already accepted Christianity, the developments it has brought in their society and mainly the truth that Jesus is the only true God, majority of the Kukis without much hesitation got converted into Christianity. The words of Christ, concept of salvation, the doctrines of Christianity, just the mere thought that their soul after death would be with Jesus fascinated them. Christianity is about God which is real and true and through belief in Him only the soul can be saved from the sins one committed. These were the reasons for accepting Christianity as their new religion according to 9.44 % of the Kuki converted respondents.

15.56 % of the Kuki Christian converts narrated the way they came in contact with Christianity and consequently got converted. Among them an old aged Vaiphei urban man said, "The youth of my village started a church. Along with some of my friends I went to the church out of curiosity but we did not tell our parents for fear of being reprimanded. In the church we were welcomed by the members of the church and from that day onwards we started going everyday. Then I told my parents whatever I have listened and what was explained and taught to me in the church. At first, my parents asked me not to visit the church again, but I did not obey them and continued even then. And I kept on insisting and convincing them and at last succeeded in taking my parents also to the church. In the beginning, they were hesitant but after some time they also liked it and we all got converted in 1945. We were preached about Jesus and told the obsolete and some bad things about our forefather's religion".



The other remaining 3.89 % respondents converted in the following ways. Among them, a middle aged Vaiphei rural man, who was born in a Christian family and baptized in his childhood said, “In 1965 I was reborn again when I listened to a Pastor who told a story about Jesus. Then and there I realized my sins and repented my whole life. After that I confessed and got relieved from the sins. Then onwards I have been a true follower of Jesus”. A primary school pass old aged Paite man said, “After reading the Bible my whole life had changed. The main part of the Bible which made me to change my mind and accept Jesus was Chapter-14, Verse-15 (The Acts) which explains that the world is created by Him”.

“The Acts of Apostles” has been quoted from Chapter-14, Verse-15

And saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea and all things that are in them” (The New Testament 2000:207).

One middle aged Thadou urban woman who migrated from Burma said that there was not much influence of Christianity in Burma. So she got the words of God very late after she came to Moreh in the year 1970. After much consideration and thinking about life after death, where one can do nothing to help the soul, she decided to make a good path for her to be with Jesus after death. Thus, in 1985 she accepted Christianity. An old aged Kom woman said, “My friends told me about Jesus after they accepted Christianity and came to know about it. Initially I did not give a serious thought about it until some evangelists came to my village and talked about Jesus. The evangelists told about the Gospel of Christ and that Jesus is the only Savior of our souls. This made me accept Christianity in 1947”.

One middle aged Thadou man said, “In the year 1960 one of my cousins became a pastor so following him one after another all my relatives got converted. My

pastor cousin preached and explained clearly to the family and village elders about Gospel. When the chief of the village was convinced, he ordered to kill a cow, then had feast and decided to construct a church in the village to solve the problem of covering a long distance upto another village to attend the church service. Then they all got converted to Christianity”.

Another middle aged Thadou man said, “A pastor came to preach me in 1966 but I accepted Christianity only because of my wife and family who wanted me to convert and leave our indigenous religion”. One old aged Thadou man said, “Youths from my village got converted and opened a church. I started visiting the church along with them and after some time I accepted Jesus and got baptized”. While one middle aged Thadou urban man accepted Christianity for he wanted to believe in something which he can call a true God. So he came across one day a preaching session in Moreh and got what he was searching for. This was how he accepted Christianity.

2.22 % Kuki respondents got re-converted to Judaism. Unlike in the case of indigenous religions, wherein believers may adapt basic elements of traditional religion with a more dominant religion; in the case of world religions, adherents may convert to a second, or even third, world religion in the course of one life-span (Smith 1990).

The reasons for the ease with which the tribal populations embraced Christianity can perhaps be found in the nature of the indigenous religion. It is true that the missionaries opposed animal sacrifice; their inveighed against local morality and encouraged the natives to adopt western family structure, dress, music and dance. However, the local population discovered that it was possible to embrace Western religion without necessarily abandoning indigenous belief (Weil 2004: 224).

Among 25 % Meitie Christian believers a graduate middle aged woman from rural area narrated what made her to accept the Christ. The Bible i.e. Mathew Ch.-11,

(Verse 28:30) Verse 28: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; Verse 29: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you find rest for your souls"; Verse 30: "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light", and John Ch.-3, Verse 16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (The New Testament 2000:17&144), had a touching effect on her when preached by Mr. Th. Kumar from Langthabal and Hormi Makangmi from Khuman Lampak. She took part in a camp organized in the month of April from 15th to 16th 2002 and the above two Evangelists came there. From among the 22 participants 6 of them accepted Christianity because Christ is the true God who came alive again after death. An old aged non-Manipuri man said the Bible was preached in a Jorhat training centre. Again in Bombay, 1972 he stayed with a Christian believer. He was very much impressed by his inner peace, thoughts, etc. Later on he and his eldest daughter got baptized and accepted Christianity.

Another old aged and middle aged women said their husbands already believed in and following Christianity when they got married. They also liked it and started following the true God. A young woman came in contact when she listened to the preaching of a Pastor at one of her friend's place. She liked it and then accepted it. Another two women and two old aged men respondents were searching for salvation and realized after reading the Bible that it can be found only in Christianity. So they accepted the religion.

One middle aged Meitie man was preached by his tenant about the doctrines of Christianity for about a year after which he was convinced. Then he accepted Christ as his Savior. Another three Meitie middle aged men accepted Christianity after they met a Pastor who opened their eyes towards Christianity and after listening to the preaching of the Gospel by the evangelists and after reading the Bible he accepted

Christianity. While a middle aged Meitie man from urban area said he accepted Christianity because situation made him to. He loved a Christian tribal girl and to marry her he had to get converted as her parents wished it so. So, he got converted and married her in the church.

Again another two middle aged men said that believing in the True God is the only way for salvation. If one have faith in Christ the soul could be saved and get salvation. Our body is made of mud, so it has to be mixed with earth. They also liked the concept of burying the dead. Among them, one middle aged man said that after reading the Bible he felt that the concept of salvation could be found in Christianity for Jesus was crucified to save us. Those who have faith in Him can only get salvation which cannot be given by anyone or any religion except by the blood of Jesus as told by one of his Pastors. He also added that conscience is there within us. How to get salvation is the question for all sinners. So, to save our soul and attain eternity he accepted Christianity. Every religion is good but salvation is the main issue in Christianity.

According to the 1.67 % of the Buddhist followers, since Moreh is the international border with Myanmar he has many contacts with the people of Myanmar who are mostly Buddhists. Besides he had business dealing with the Myanmarese, during which he got interested in Buddhism.

Of the 28.33 % non-Manipuri Christian believers, twelve of them came in contact with Christianity and eventually accepted it when preachers came to their villages and told them about the Gospel of Jesus. They were convinced that Jesus is the only True God. Another three middle aged men came to know about Jesus from their tribal friends and were also influenced by them. Then they started reading the Bible and realized that Jesus is the only True God and thus accepted Him. God showed love to the world that

whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have an everlasting life. These words made another middle aged man accept Christianity.

A middle aged non-Manipuri man who is higher secondary pass said that since his childhood he has been in search of truth. Since childhood he believed in Hindu Shastra as taught by his uncle. Theirs is a very orthodox family. His uncle taught him about the sun revolving around the earth. But when he was in VIth standard in his geography book he came to know that it is not the sun but the earth which revolves around. When he could not get a clear idea what actually is the truth he started looking out for the genesis of human being and the starting of life on earth. When he was with some of his friends talking and sitting one day, one Kuki tribal friend of his gave him a small handbook. At first he was hesitant that it may turn out to be of no use. But after reading the book at midnight everyday, which he used to hide it from his family, he felt that it was true and wanted to follow it. He accepted it on his own and started praying stealthily everyday in his bed. Savior of all, faith in Him became stronger day by day. God is the soul and came in the form of human being. Believed in the creation of world genesis and how one can get salvation. There is also proof after reading the Bible and His life story. He is the only God; one who lived before the stars, moon, and sun. His sacrifices will give salvation and save all the sinners. These made him to accept Christianity. Another middle aged man said he was an orthodox Hindu, even challenged the evangelists thinking they were foreign agents. In 1987, he heard a message from the Bible which said-there is a God, a living God. He thought the Hindu Gods were very far from him. When he knew God is alive and present, the reincarnation is Jesus, he wanted to test Him. He felt bliss, peace, enlightenment which changed his life from that moment. After that he knew God is alive and accepted Him and believes in Him.

Another middle aged man said he was not sure about it but his thoughts affected his work. After hearing God's works everything became fine and normal. So he accepted Christianity and now has strong faith in Jesus.

1.67 % of non-Manipuris who are following Judaism came in touch with it through a Kuki friend.

The conversion to Buddhism meant theoretically rejection of all aspects of Hinduism, its beliefs and practices and acceptance of Buddhist religion, its ethical tenets, the Eight fold path, and other Buddhist practices. It was Ambedkar's firm belief that Buddhism disappeared from India because of the wavering attitude of the laity who worshipped along with the Buddha many other Gods and Goddesses set up by Brahmans to destroy Buddhism. Although many of its principles are still apparent in Hinduism and a sect of Hindus, termed Jains, remain influenced by it, yet Buddhism was not destined to stay in India, between 700 and 900 A.D. It lost its ground in the country as a popular faith and finally succumbed to Brahmanism, but it found a permanent footing in Ceylon, Tibet, Nepal, Burma, China and Japan and is now followed in these countries by millions of people (Buck 1977: 4).

All agreed that Theravada Buddhism spread to East by sea, from South India to Ceylon and then later to Burma. This was an established ancient trade route, which was utilized by the Buddhist missionaries possibly as early as the first century A.D. The land through which Buddhism spread was not via North-East India, but via the North-West, along the Silk Route, which went North of the Himalayas and through Central Asia into China. Only in the 5th century A.D. at the earliest did Buddhism, now in its Mahayana form, begin to return westwards from China to reach Tibet and subsequently the Bay of Bengal. The Buddhist pilgrim routes followed the same course, which is either along the

Silk Route or by sea. There is no evidence whatsoever of any Buddhist influence along the route from Manipur eastwards⁵.

The Meities and the non-Manipuri respondents also said that Buddhism was not properly preached to the people. Since it got extinct from the country in an early period, said 1.67% Meitie Christian convert respondent from the urban area, its impact was not found. 3.33% non-Manipuri converts feel Buddhism is not liked by many though some follow it. The 1.67% Meitie Buddhist believer respondents from urban area of Chandel district also asserted that doctrines of Buddhism could not be reached one and all because of its lack of preachers. While the remaining 23.33% Christian converts said they liked the doctrines of Christianity more than that of Buddhism and 73.33% non-convert Meitie said that they are not interested in any other religion, so, they never gave a thought of other religions. According to 25% Christian converts Christianity was a belief in the true God but did not like the doctrines of Buddhism. 71.67% non-convert non-Manipuri respondents said they did not like other religions and were also not preached to them.

According to the 98.33% Kuki respondents, Buddhism could not make any impact in their society, due to its lack of preaching to the people. Since Buddhism came later in their society after its revival, and also after the coming of Christianity, it could not make much impact. Already influenced by the Christian belief of not having rebirths, thinking of a next life, is not liked by many Kukis in particular and Christian converts of Meities and non-Manipuris in general. They believe that Buddha was just a human being, and Buddhism is a man made religion, while Jesus is the incarnation of the Lord Himself. They lack preachers though India being its birth place. As a result the percentage of Buddhist followers are less. Now also followers of Buddhism are less. Buddhism preaches about one's deed and its result in the next life only which the Christian believers do not like. The remaining 1.67% non-convert respondents did not make any comment.

We are fortunate in having a chronicle which purports to trace the history of the state back to the first century A.D. and which after about the 15th century become quite detailed. The Cheitharol Kumbaba contains multiple references to the traditional lai (God), and gives us very full information about the Hinduization of the Manipur valley, and even of the entry of Muslims. It is completely silent about Buddhism. It is inconceivable, if Buddhism were ever a force in Manipur, that it would not have been mentioned. Even after the suppression of the traditional lai by Garib Niwaz, they are frequently mentioned in the Cheitharol Kumbaba. It is stretching credulity, to the limit to believe that for some reason all traces of Buddhism could have been removed from the chronicle. Furthermore there is no evidence for Buddhism in Manipur in any of the other archaic manuscripts nor indeed in the writings of those British colonial officers (McCulloch, Brown, Shakespear, Hodson, Higgins) who showed a particular interest in Manipuri's culture and religion.

Paratt concluded in her paper entitled, "*A Note on the Theory of Bhuddhism in Manipur*" that there is no convincing historical or archaeological evidence that the population of Manipur ever came under Buddhist influence, or even, apart from the limited period of the Burmese occupation, it even hosted a minority of non-Manipuri Buddhists. The mere presence of Buddhist icons in Manipur then is not conclusive proof that they were ever used for religious purposes by the local population, still less that the population of Manipur ever adopted Buddhism as its religion⁵.

Inspite of the close connection Manipur had with Burma during the ancient days as also stated by many scholars, there is no trace of the Buddhistic religious belief in the state. Parrat expressed her surprise for not finding any close link between Manipur and Burma, and the total absence of Buddhism in the state inspite of sharing an international border at Moreh, in Chandel district (Paratt 1980).

According to the 96.11% Kuki respondents there have been changes in ceremonies, rituals, festivals, religious and social practices. They have discarded old beliefs of unknown deities and spirits forsaking the cumbersome rituals. The ancient tradition and mode of worship have been changed and some are modified. Most of the ceremonies and feasts given on certain occasions with zu have been modified by replacing zu with tea now. Changes have also come in the funeral and death rituals where the pastor only prays for the peaceful rest of the soul. Festivals where sacrifices and zu were the main course of offerings are no more continuing. The Festival of harvest "Kut" which used to be celebrated officiating by a thiempu has been changed to just an offering of the first harvest of the season to Jesus and now is officiated by the church pastor. No more elaborate rituals or ceremonies with animal sacrifices are performed. Marriages are also performed in the church. The other 2.22 % respondents who follow Judaism said that their traditional ceremonies, rituals, festivals, religious and social practices have been changed.

According to the 1.67% non-convert respondents there has been changes in the ceremonies, ritual, festivals and social practices of entire Kuki society, but they try to keep their traditions and customs intact as much as possible.

According to the 25% converted Meitie respondents after following Christianity they have all discarded their ceremonies, rituals, festivals, religious and social practices which they were following for ages. They now perform the marriage ceremony in the church. They no longer perform ritual feasts by animal sacrifices and serving zu. Now they bury their dead. The Christian follower women have stopped putting chandan on their forehead anymore which is usually done by married women of the society after taking bath early in the morning for performing puja. The respondents said they go for social functions, but do not partake anything which has been offered to the God or Goddesses. One respondent said whenever he goes to his parents he still continue to

perform and celebrate the rituals and festivals according to the customs. While for the other 75% Meitie non-convert respondents there have been no changes in the ceremonies, rituals, festivals, religious and social practices.

The 28.33% non-Manipuri Christian believers now celebrate only Christian festival such as Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter. They are no more following their traditional ceremonies, rituals, festivals, religious and social practices. They perform their marriages in the church, bury their dead, celebrate no Hindu festivals, etc. But one middle aged man said he still lights the lamp, though no pujas are performed. He celebrates Diwali with his friends and family. He also celebrates the Meitie festival of Ningol Chakouba (a festival of inviting the married sisters and daughters at the maternal home for a grand feast a day after Diwali). He feels that all these festivals should be preserved, since they represent the culture of their society. He said he encourages others also to do the same. What he does not strongly believe in or do is offering and worshipping the idols.

The traditional ceremonies, rituals, festivals, religious and social practices of the Meities and the non-Manipuris seem to be not affected by the Christian converts, as we see them still following their traditions and customs. Since 75% of Meities and 71.67% of non-Maipuri respondents, are still following their tradition and customs. According to 5% Meitie and 8.33% non-Manipuri Christian converts, they are considered to be defying the social norms and are even threatened or ostracized by their own families or relatives.

According to 91.67% Kuki respondents, Christianity has shaped their behavior and outlook in many ways. Before, they used to think that for any unusual thing or incident, spirits were the cause and tried to appease them by making sacrifices. They were afraid of everything. They did not have any idea about the creation of the world. They just believed that it was all done by spirits. They used to enjoy life without any knowledge about their after life, why they are here etc. An old aged Simte man said that in

olden days they used to drink zu throughout the day and pass their time but now it is not like that. Now they know the God. The 91.67% respondents said their belief in the savior can lead them to a peaceful life by loving others, learnt to live soberly, to love their neighbors, to appreciate others, to live and let live, live contently and above all, have hope for a glorious life for the future and after death too without worrying about revenge. There is no more war among themselves. They have left behind hunting, drinking zu and being lazy. They have found a new goal of life to be with God. Their view about a True God has been changed since they are no more following their old life style. Now many of their old life styles have been forgotten. Their economic, social and meaning of life has been enriched by discarding many superstitious beliefs, making them to think about a life after death, the forgiving power. A middle aged man said that if he was not a Christian his life would have been different. The respondents also feel that they learnt to have patience, care for fellow people and learnt to go in the righteous path. Similarly, according to the 23.33 % Meitie and 15 % non-Manipuri Christian convert respondents Christianity has shaped their behavior in the group and their outlook on life. The respondents said they have learnt the true meaning of life and changed their behavior. They are now changed human beings who believe in the True God. They no more believe in superstitions. After believing in Jesus they now know the goal and meaning of their lives. Now they are more truthful to themselves and others, have more patience, deal any situation calmly and accept life as gift of God and whatever happens is God's will. A middle aged Meitie woman said that she is now not afraid of death or about what will happen in life the next minute.

While 4.44% Kuki Christian believers said there has not been any change in their behavior or outlook on life because of Christianity. The reasons they gave were that if it had shaped, then there would not have been enmity among them, crime and hatred would not have been there or in rise in the society. The other 2.22% Kuki and 1.67% non-

Manipuri Judaism believers said that there have been some changes in their outlook because of their faith, Judaism. 1.67% Meitie Christian convert said there is no difference in the outlook on life for him. He felt that he is where he started from. The only difference is the support which he gets from his church. That too he needs to attend regularly or else they raise objections to his membership. Besides the other 1.67% Kuki non-Christian believers, 75% the Meities and the 70% non-Manipuris also felt that there have been not many changes in their lives after coming of Christianity in their society.

According to all the Kuki respondents Christianity has affected the native religion a lot. It is no more believed by the mass and almost forgotten even by the older generation. It has been affected to the extent that it is lost totally. There is no incorporation of native beliefs into Christianity. The native beliefs consists of beliefs in evil spirits and unknown spirits whereas Christianity is the religion of faith in the Almighty God which is trinity i.e. Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Hence no traditional God has been identified with Christian God. Appeasing of evil spirits is no more done by the believers because it is against Christianity and the church also does not permit its members to practice.

But in case of the Meities and the non-Manipuri non-converts and Christian followers, Christianity has not affected their native religion. All the respondents said that they have not incorporated any native beliefs into Christianity. The Christian converts have not identified any traditional God with Christian God. And none of them now does any appeasing rituals or offer prayer to the evil spirits.

The Nyakyusa converts to Christianity who, though unsophisticated villagers, when asked why they had become Christians replied unhesitatingly 'because there is life'. So one of the radical change as Africans turn to Christianity is the seeking for union with God, rather than separation from that which is powerful and dangerous (Wilson 1971:47-48).

VII.4. Goals, Objectives and Activities of the Missionaries

The main goal of the British missionaries was to convert the Manipur Hindu in the valley. The preaching of Gospel among the Hindus was not allowed because of the British Government's responsibility of governing the state until the Hindu Rajah could come of age. Their objective was to spread the Gospel in every nook and corner of the state. So the missionaries had to go among the hill tribes. Their activities began with the starting of schools, distributing books, by extending help to poor and meritorious students, by providing free medicine and medical help, starting orphanage homes, etc.

VII.4. a. Education

'Education' and 'Missionary Work' in the context of N.E. India seem to go hand in hand. A hundred years ago, the people in the region were reeling under the cloud of ignorance. The Missionary found himself under tremendous pressure to begin with the teaching of the 'ABCD'.

The seed of education was first shown by Capt. Gordon when he organized a primary Education centre in Manipur in the beginning of the 19th century. Due to the untimely death of Capt. Gordon, the seed could not germinate. In 1872, Major General W. E. Nuthall, the then Political Agent opened a school at Imphal with English language as the medium of instruction. For this, the Government of Bengal presented books, maps and other requisites of the value of Rs. 40,500. But the school did not function properly due to want of local cooperation or encouragement. The people of the land did not appreciate the establishment of English school and had no love and fancy for English education and as such the parents did not send their children to the school (Jamini 1989:30-31).

As the days had gone by, circumstances changed. The number of European visitors to Manipur increased. Side by side, the English Missionaries became active in every nook and corner of Manipur and made the people feel the necessity of English

education. Maharaja Chandra Keerti gave his consent to Sir James Johnstone for establishing an English school. The king allotted a plot of land where the school building was constructed. Thus Sir James Johnstone established an English school in 1885 at Imphal which is now known as Johnstone Higher Secondary School. During 1893-94, two L. P. Schools, one at Sekmai and another at Mao Thana were opened. In 1895, Tera Keithel L. P. School and Pettigrew L. P. School were established (ibid).

Later, English education and William Pettigrew became almost synonymous with regard to the growth of education in Manipur. As soon as he reached Imphal, he made the necessary preparation for advancing education and literacy among the people. The people in the plains found it extremely difficult to adapt themselves to the new ideas and ways of life.

Being anxious to spread education as widely as possible so that he could Christianize the heathens, Pettigrew took private tuition class which consisted of children of the Government servants. He also opened an ideal school by writing books in Manipuri and taught them in his school. A Manipuri Dictionary and some other text books are an outstanding and unforgettable works (as quoted from Jeyasaleen 1993: 265).

In the beginning, the white men were disliked because of their intentions but once the people realized the sincerity of the Missionaries in their zeal to discipline and educate the native children, their pressure was tolerated. Gradually they understood that education was a craft to light up children's position in society (Miri 1980).

Today there is a sea change in the people's opinion in respect of the Mission Education. Everyone admits of its worth in manifold ways (Jeyasaleen 1993: 266).

The Nagas and the Kukis of Manipur did not have a written language. Education was unknown to them. The missionaries for the first time introduced the

written script. Rev. Pettigrew, Rev. W.R. Roberts and Dr. Cozier introduced the Roman script among the Tangkhuls, the Vaipheis and the Kukis respectively. In 1917 Rev. Robert with the help of Pastor Thangkai published the Gospel of St. John in Vaiphei. The missionaries were the pioneers to spread literacy in the hill areas of Manipur. The first primary school was established in Mao in 1893 (Ansari 1991: 164). Convent school like the Don Bosco has its branch in many parts of the state in urban and rural areas too. Their main aim is to impart quality education to the natives. One missionary school is there in Kangpokpi but it is not free of cost for all students. Theological colleges, One Catholic School at Keitheimanbi grant scholarships to students, distribute free books, school uniform, stationery, etc. for the poor but meritorious students. Hostels for Kuki students who have come from the rural areas are there in Imphal. Accommodation is given at nominal rates and students have to follow certain rules regarding their routine prayer, studies, cleanliness, etc. The Kuki Baptist Church helps in guiding and leading bright students for higher degrees and even sends to different educational and professional institutions for their benefit.

The introduction of Western education was an event of astonishing significance. The Western education rapidly transformed the society. Since then every effort was directed towards a sound education and even some had the fortune of going to United States of America, United Kingdom, etc., in order to receive Western Education. This was definitely a boon to the tribal people who had been toiling day and night to make both ends meet. But with the advent of Christian education every one was made responsible for his/her own welfare, fate and living standard, etc. The creation of salaried posts brought with it a new awareness towards life and all that life and world can give to one (Lien 1981:118-119).

VII.4.b. *Social welfare*

After the arrival, the Missionaries, found that the people hardly knew how to take care of their health and hygiene. Hence, the establishment of hospitals and dispensaries become part and parcel of their activities to facilitate the indigenous people.

Another equally important reason is that no matter how efficient the local physician in their service to the people, the death rate due to various diseases was higher among the tribal people. When the Missionaries prepared to take care of the sick as their primary duty, the native people indeed welcomed it (Miri 1980).

The Missionaries believe that the healing ministry itself is an announcement of the Gospel. During the progress of healing, one is able to come intimately close to an individual and witness the love of Christ. Healing, it is interestingly being recognized, not a matter of tablets and injections. The patient is often living in a world of his/her own, and it is the challenge of the health worker to enter into this world, to rebuild confidence and lead them to counseling, form an important part of the medical treatment. Part of the counseling is the very loving relationship that health worker builds up with the patient. For a Missionary, such health programmes become powerful means for establishing relationship with a community that will lead them ultimately to the embracing of Christian values (Menampampil 1991:18).

A Leprosy colony was immediately began at Kangpokpi in 1929. After about 10 years of its existence, there were about sixty-nine male patients, twenty female patients, and eleven children in the colony. Out of the total number of patients, fifty two were Christians. The aim of the colony was to treat the leprosy patients and rehabilitate them when they were cured. There was a dormitory called the Mackenzie Hostel where unaffected children, whose parents were leprosy, were cared for. Many of these children

were sent to the local Mission School at Kangpokpi for their education. A dispensary for emergency treatment was also opened at Kangpokpi Mission Station. But as the need grew great, some of the serious cases were allowed to remaining within the Mission Station for the doctor's attention (Champang Jajao as quoted from Jeyasaleen).

Hence, we understand that from the Missionary's bag people saw the tablets and modern medicine for the first time. Seeing the miracle of tablets, people used to folk the Missionary with all sorts of complaints because they found enormous relief to their aches and pains. The Missionaries did not leave the simple folks just at that.

Missionaries were also conscious that the way of living and life standard were at low ebb. People's houses and the village atmosphere were dirty. They kept all the domestic animals like buffaloes, cows, mithuns, pigs, dogs and chickens in the same house in which they lived. The newly baptized Christians were taught about the importance of personal cleanliness. They were instructed to keep the house clean and keep the surrounding clean. The domestic animals were kept outside the houses and even the custom of adorning the houses with skulls gave way. People began to make separate sheds to keep the birds and animals, a little away from the house. The house-gates were made in such a way as to prevent the dogs from entering the house that easily (Lolly 1985:71).

After becoming Christians, people are more concerned about one another's health and total well-being. When someone is ill and when admitted in the hospital, people visit the homes as well as the hospital where the sick one is admitted. This has become a regular feature. Whenever someone falls ill, the missionaries instruct the people afflicted to be taken to the hospital so that proper treatment is given in time. The Christian community then backs up the sick person with best wishes , prayers and visits for the speedy recovery and help one to accept God's will in life. If the person happens to be

poor, the churches collect special offerings from the faithful towards helping a particular person (Jeyasaleen 1993: 296).

Some NGOs, run by Christian Missionaries, which have their regional branches like the World Vision, grant projects to make bridges, to construct community hall and also lay the village roads too. An Orphanage in Kanglatombi was established by the missionaries. It is a spacious one where the children could be seen playing around or doing their usual chores. They have a school within the campus where vocational training is given to the children. Another one is there at Moreh run by Believer's Church. Vacation Bible School (VBS), Bible camp for Nominal Christians, De-addiction camp and centre for drunkards and drug abusers are also established by the Missionaries to attend the needs of several people. Regular youth training and woman training camps are held by the churches on how a Christian youth in general and a woman in particular should behave in the family.

VII.4.c. *Economic*

The church teaches how to manage their time and money. The management of money and offering their one tenth of their income to the church in turn comes handy to help the members of the church in time of need. This tithe is generally offered by every believing Christians, either in cash or in kind. The church lends monetary help to its members who are poor in time of emergency.

While preaching Christianity, its philosophy, ethics and practices, the missionaries could manage to discourage the primitives to stop animal sacrifices. This inturn helped the poor to avoid the burden of buying or losing the animals for sacrifices. In course of time they realized the economic benefits they enjoy by not following their indigenous practices and by following Christian practices. They have learnt to save and manage their earnings meaningfully.

VII.4.d. *Cultural*

Traditionally the Kuki wore colored horizontal designs woven by the women of the household. Now, they are using the traditional dresses only occasionally, though ladies in the rural areas are still continuing to weave them. The Kuki tribes' traditional dresses are worn by their people in social functions and while attending the church. It's rare to see younger generation wearing traditional dresses. They usually wear it only at the time of festivals. Western wear like pants, shirts and skirts are very common among them.

According to 28.33 % Kuki Christian converts there have been changes in various aspects of their lives. But the changes are mainly in their personality, spirituality and towards the God. The respondents said that after conversion they have stopped taking zu which was a must in their society in every big or small occasion. Taking zu throughout the day was an aspect of Kuki lifestyle which affected their health too. But nowadays tea has replaced zu. They have also stopped killing animals for sacrifices. They now know the true meaning of life. They have a new outlook towards life, respect for women, hygienically aware, changed their lifestyle, learnt to meaningfully utilize their time by not wasting in unproductive ways, and increased knowledge about the world around them. They now have no fear about after life, have peace at heart, togetherness, cooperation, love and care for the fellow people, started a healthy lifestyle. Economically they have learnt to save and manage their earnings. They would not have been civilized and would have continued to live without any aim like before had they were not educated. After education, they have got jobs in the Government services. One middle aged man added that for those who can not afford to educate their children the church has provisions to help such families in giving education to the children.

According to the 25 % Meitie and the 28.33 % non-Manipuri Christian convert respondents the benefits they got after conversion are mainly the changes in their attitude towards life. The respondents felt that after conversion they have become friendly with others; feeling peace at heart; developed harmony within the groups and with others; became very cooperative and disciplined, cool; developed patience and control over their anger; learnt to forgive others and overcome fear about life after death. Interaction, mingling with others have also increased which helped them in learning many new things and got enriched their knowledge. They could help and work for God by conveying the message to others. Besides these, in materialistic terms the church helps those families who can not afford the education of their children by giving textbooks or lend help to them monetarily.

A Meitie convert middle aged man from urban area said that besides all these he also got medical facilities, education and certain help in time of crisis. Another Meitie convert middle aged man said that God is one i.e. Jesus and He gave him strength when he was ill. When his friends came to preach and prayed for him, initially he never took them seriously. But later he realized Jesus is the True God.

But one old aged Kom man wanted to bring out the demerits of converting to another religion. He felt that the present generation firstly does not have any knowledge about what their forefathers believed in, secondly they are drifting away from their traditions; thirdly they do not believe any more in respecting or listening to their elders; they are becoming more Westernized in very many ways.

VII.5. Knowledge about Christianity among the Respondents

According to 92.22 % Kukis, 25 % Meities and 28.33 % non-Manipuri Christian believer respondents, Christianity is a religion for all-the poor and the rich. While the remaining 3.89 % respondents were of the opinion that Christianity is a religion

for the poor only because it helps the poor people. The reasons for believing that Christianity is a religion for the poor as well as for the rich by majority of the respondents are that they have never felt the difference and people are treated equally. Christianity is all embracing. The respondents who believe Christianity to be the religion of the poor belonged to rural areas with limited income. So their geographical area and the living standard seem to have influenced their opinion.

The 1.67 % non-convert and 2.2 % Judaism followers among the Kukis, 75 % Meitie and 71.66 % non-Manipuri respondents did not make any comment.

61.11% rural and 13.89% urban Kuki, 1.67% urban Meitie convert, 3.33% rural and 1.67% urban non-Manipuri convert respondents are of the opinion that the general impression towards Christianity is indifferent in the society. Another 15% rural and 1.11% urban Kuki, 1.67% urban and 3.33% rural Meitie, 3.33% rural non-Manipuri converted respondents feel that the general impression towards Christianity is positive. While 7.22% rural including the non-convert and 1.67% urban Kuki, 5% urban and 13.33% rural Meitie, 3.33% urban and 16.67% rural converted non-Manipuri respondents asserted that the impression of Christianity according to the general population is negative.

According to the 96.11 % Kuki respondents the influence of Christianity on the Kuki society is overwhelming. The traditional life of the Kuki has been remarkably changed. Now there are countable numbers of the traditional Kuki houses and the way their forefathers led their lives are also not the same anymore. They have become more westernized and a free lifestyle has come up. The cultural elements like symbols, myths, folklore, and the traditional life of Kukis have all changed and almost vanished. 2.22 % of the respondents who believe in Judaism also asserted that the traditional life of the Kuki tribes has been changed.

According to the 1.67 % non-converts due to the influence of Christianity the traditional life and culture as a whole has been greatly influenced as most of the tribal population, even their own children do not like to follow or retain their myths, symbols, folklore, etc.

According to the 28.89% Kuki, 25% Meitie and 28.33% non-Manipuri converted Christian and the 1.67% Judaism believers of the Meitie communities of the three districts, at present there are no foreign Christian Missionaries working for the upliftment of Kukis. Now only evangelists are doing the preaching of the Gospel to the people. As for the upliftment, funds are given to them from the American Baptist Church. These respondents also said that they would not have followed Christianity if it was not preached in their village, society or in the family. Any religion is accepted through preaching or explaining, according to them.

Globalization is a process in which social life within societies is increasingly affected by international influences based on everything from political and trade ties to shared music, clothing styles and mass media (Johnson 2000: 122). It may mean political, economic or religious globalization. If at all Christianity is to be held responsible for any one of these it may perhaps be so because, Christianity today has a global denotation.

Out of the sample of one hundred and eighty rural and urban Kuki respondents, 93.33% of them do not think that Christianity is responsible for globalization. While the remaining 6.67% of the Kuki respondents felt that Christianity is responsible for globalization. Christianity is becoming a world religion and it tries to reach every nook and corner, where its followers are settled and helps them. Today's powerful countries are all Christian nations. One Kuki respondent said that the Pope will rule one day and now America wants to bring the world together.

According to all the converted and non-converted rural and urban Meitie respondents and the 96.67% converted and non-converted non-Manipuri respondents Christianity is not responsible for globalization. Only 3.33% middle aged non-Manipuri Christian believers felt that Christianity was responsible for globalization because if we take God's message to the world, it will spread and become one. It would also be a harmless globalization of religion.

While the other 1.11% Kuki respondents are of the opinion that globalization has made an impact on both the religions of the Kuki and the caste Hindu Meities. The respondents said that because of globalization their religion has become more flexible. "Our ways of life does not change but the world is moving forward to keep pace with it. We must embrace Christianity which changes the world into a different direction", said a middle aged Thadou man. Another old aged Thadou man said that in terms of religious globalization, Christianity has definitely imparted the religions of the Kuki tribes as well as the caste Hindu Meities for the simple reason that as civilization advances man is no more content with the old culture- a culture or belief simply handed down to us by our forefathers without knowing what it was or is. Man reasons to find out what is the truth about all these. Naturally those who are not satisfied with the old belief tries to find out a new one whatever it may be to suit his conscience and belief. Respondents' attitude towards Christianity is given in Table VII.3.

Table VII.3
Respondents' attitude towards Christianity

Groups of Respondents	Indifferent	%	Positive	%	Negative	%	Total
Kuki							
Rural	110	73.33	27	18	13	8.67	150
Urban	25	83.33	2	6.67	3	10	30
Meitie							
Rural	30	75	2	5	8	20	40
Urban	16	80	1	5	3	15	20
Non-Manipuri							
Rural	30	71.42	2	4.76	10	23.80	42
Urban	16	88.89	0	0	2	11.11	18
Total	227	75.67	34	11.33	39	13	300

CASE STUDY

RURAL

Lun Lhovum

40 years, Male

Graduate

Motbung village, Sardar Hills West Block

Senapati District

Lun Lhovum of Sitlhou clan is a young middle aged educated man, who is very keen in upgrading and preserving the name of his tribe. He is fluent in Manipuri, English and Hindi. He is a teacher by profession and his wife Nengsi, 35 years old, is also a graduate and owns a beauty parlor at the Motbung market. Theirs is a love marriage. They have two children. For the sake of their children's education they have shifted from Motbung to a nearby town, Chingmeirong, in Imphal East district. There they have bought a house, so that, they can give their children a better education in a good school, which would not have been possible in Motbung.

Mr. Lun said that they trace their origin from China. They started believing and following Christianity since his great grandfather's generation. He said, "Thadous are by nature lazy people. We want to be free and not under any kind of rule, or priest or Chief. So we accepted Christianity where everyone is equal and God's children". He continued, "I believe in Christianity, but I don't want to follow the way these people are following. If one is a true Christian one should try to be like Him."

Mr. Lun had problem with the use of the word Kuki for all the other tribes also. Instead it should be used only for the Thadous or only Thadou would suffice. He added that in 1936, all the tribes were recognized and scheduled as Kuki tribes. But in 1956, when the Linguistic Survey of India came to Manipur, each tribe wanted to be recognized individually by the particular tribal names. So the term Kuki started to disintegrate. He said that he discusses this topic very frequently with many learned men from his tribe because of which his wife is fed up and calls him a 'Thadou fanatic' said Mr. Lun.

CASE STUDIES

RURAL

Paomilen Sitlhou
23 years, Male
Graduate
Machi
Chandel district

Paomilen Sitlhou, a Thadou young educated man. He is fluent with English, Hindi and Manipuri language as he studied in Sainik School of CBSE board. He had a love marriage with his wife Tingboi, who is also a graduate. They have a one year old son called Gamkhotang. Their traditional occupation is cultivation but his father works as a clerk. And Paomilen is also teaching in a private school and Tingboi is a housewife. Though born in a Christian family and a man of the new generation where most of his age groups are totally unaware of what their forefathers' beliefs were, Paomilen has quiet a good knowledge of their traditional beliefs and folktales. The reason for which he gave is that he is interested in all these things and whenever possible sits with the elderly people. He said that his father is a knowledgeable person and has a good collection of books on the Thadou Kuki. In the future he plans to write a book on the Thadou folktales as most of the folktales are orally transmitted from generation to generation and are losing its importance. So he wants to write about it and preserve it for the coming generation to enjoy and treasure.

According to Paomilen, if they have to preserve their culture, customs, and tradition they themselves have to come forward and work on it.

CASE STUDY

URBAN

Manjamin Ngaite
24 years, Female
B.Sc. Graduate
New Lamka
Churachandpur

Manjamin Ngaite is a very active member of a students' association. Besides her mother tongue, she is fluent in English, Hindi, Manipuri and other tribal dialects. They are three brothers and three sisters and her mother is a business woman who is a wholesale dealer of the household products from Myanmar. They also have charcoal business which is very profitable during the winter seasons. All her younger siblings are still studying in schools and colleges. Though quite well educated she knows that she is far from getting a Government job to support her family. Even if they have reserved seats it is very difficult for some one of her status to secure a job. She said that they do not have any influential relatives or friends also. So she helps her mother in the household chores and in the business also. She does not want to see her younger brothers and sisters lacking behind their friends in any matter. Because she had to compromise many a times with whatever she desired to have in her childhood as her mother was the sole earner for the seven members' family. She expressed her realization of the need of a father in a family.

According to her, their ancestors originated from Khul or cave which she thinks is in China. Basically, they are not the natives of Churachandpur. She said they

migrated from Ukhrul in the year 1992 and thanked God that they came out from that place before the ethnic cleansing riots which broke out in 1993. Being born in a Christian family she is not much aware of the traditional beliefs. She is not in the favor of marrying her maternal uncle's son. The reason is that they are in the interior hills and she says that it's high time that girls choose their own life partner, though with the consent of their parents.

She is also very active in the Church work as a member of the youths' wing. She said it keeps her busy all the time besides rendering service to the society and also thinks that she is doing all this for Jesus only.

VII.6. Conclusions

According to the Kukis, Christianity is a religion of all-the poor and the rich. But the general impression of the Meities and the non-Manipuris towards Christianity is indifferent. Various denominations of Christianity are present in Manipur and there are no criteria for any believer of Christ to become a member of any of the denominations. Changes brought by the modern education, which the converts got and the social welfare activities of the missionaries, broadened the minds of the Kukis and accepted the new religion. Christianity has not made an impact on the native religions of the Meities and the non-Manipuris made tremendously affected the native religion of the Kukis. They have discarded old beliefs of unknown deities and spirits. Major changes could also be observed not only in Kuki indigenous religion but also in their way of life, outlook and the behavior. The various aspects of their indigenous religion, which formed a significant part of the tribal life, have been replaced by simple Christian way of life. The tribal way of life-spiritually, economically, hygienically and disciplinarily, has changed positively after following Christianity. Impact of Buddhism was not found much because it was not preached among the Manipuris. Already influenced by Christian philosophy of not believing in rebirth, thinking of a next life is not liked by many Kukis. Besides, the Kukis consider Buddhism to be a man made religion, where as Jesus is the incarnation of the God Himself. It should, however, be noticed that there is almost no flow of converts to

Hinduism, Islam or any other organized religion. The reasons are obvious that the majority of the converts have very much to gain and many things to lose in any other exchange of equation (Misra 1980:83).

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